



General Assembly

Sixty-fourth session

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 1st meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 1 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)

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09-54430 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 5: Election of the officers of the Main Committees

1. **The Chairperson** said that the Group of Western European and Other States had nominated Mrs. Schroderus-Fox (Finland) for the remaining office of Vice-Chairperson of the Committee for the sixty-fourth session.

2. *Mrs. Schroderus-Fox (Finland) was elected Vice-Chairperson by acclamation.*

Organization of work (A/C.4/64/1; A/C.4/64/L.1; A/C.4/64/INF/1)

3. **The Chairperson** drew attention to document A/C.4/64/1, which contained the agenda items allocated to the Committee, and to document A/C.4/64/L.1, which contained the Committee's programme of work with a proposed timetable.

4. He then drew attention to the relevant rules and recommendations of the General Assembly contained in the report of the General Committee (A/64/250) regarding the work of the Main Committees, including those contained in General Assembly decision 34/401 and resolutions 58/126 and 58/316.

5. In order to make full use of the time and conference services that had been made available to the Committee, he would convene and adjourn meetings promptly and would convene meetings only when there were sufficient delegations inscribed on the list of speakers. All speakers, in particular the first three speakers for a given meeting, should be present in the Committee room on time.

6. The Assembly had decided to continue its practice of departing from the rule that one quarter of the members must be present for a Main Committee meeting to be declared open. On questions of procedure and organization of work, the Committee would comply strictly with the relevant provisions of General Assembly decision 34/401 (A/520/Rev.16, annex V). In line with the time limits for explanations of vote and rights of reply, statements on points of order should be limited to five minutes. He suggested that statements by members of the Committee during the general debate should not exceed 10 minutes, or 15 minutes in the case of those speaking on behalf of several delegations.

7. With respect to resolutions, he drew attention, *inter alia*, to paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 48/264, which encouraged Member States to exercise restraint in making proposals requesting reports of the Secretary-General, and to paragraph 2 of resolution 57/270 B, which requested that resolutions should be short and focus more on oriented operative paragraphs.

8. With regard to programme budget implications, and rule 153 of the rules of procedure, he noted that the General Assembly had drawn the Committee's attention to paragraph 12 of its decision 34/401, which stated that it was imperative for the Main Committee to allow sufficient time for the preparation of the estimate of expenditures by the Secretariat and for its consideration by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Committee. That could take a few days, depending on the type and complexity of a proposal. For draft resolutions, draft decisions and amendments, with the names of the sponsors thereof, should be submitted, in writing, to the Secretariat, in electronic and hard copies. The Secretariat required at least 48 hours to process a draft resolution.

9. According to paragraph 3 (b) of section II of the annex to resolution 58/316, the Committee would, at the end of the session, adopt a provisional programme of work for the next session. Agenda item 118, "Revitalization of the work of the General Assembly", had been allocated to the Committee solely for the purpose of approving the tentative programme for the Committee's next session. Agenda item 119, entitled "Programme planning", had been allocated to all the Main Committees and to the plenary of the General Assembly, in order to enhance discussion, evaluation, planning, budgeting and monitoring of reports. Thus far, he had not received any information on that agenda item.

10. The Committee would continue with the work of convening panels and holding interactive discussions under agenda item 27, entitled "University for Peace", agenda item 28, entitled "Assistance in mine action", agenda item 30, entitled "International cooperation for the peaceful uses of outer space", agenda item 31, entitled "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East", agenda item 32, entitled "Comprehensive review of the whole of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects".

agenda item 34, entitled "Questions relating to information".

11. In accordance with the decisions taken in connection with the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly, particularly resolutions 56/509 and 58/126, the Committee would take up agenda item 5, entitled "Election of the officers of the Main Committees", approximately three months before the next session of the Assembly.

12. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to approve the programme of work and the timetable contained in document A/C.4/64/L.1.

13. *It was so decided.*

14. **The Chairperson** said that, as at previous sessions, the Committee would set up a working group of the whole to prepare draft resolutions for submission under agenda item 30, entitled "International cooperation in the peaceful uses of outer space". It was his understanding that the working group would be chaired by the delegation of Colombia. He took it that the Committee wished to establish the group.

15. *It was so decided.*

16. **The Chairperson** noted that, in approving its programme of work and timetable, the Committee had decided to hold one general debate covering all agenda items relating to decolonization, namely items 35 to 39. Doing so would enable Committee members to speak on any or all of those agenda items at any meeting devoted to the topic.

Requests for hearings (aides-memoires 01/09 and 01/09/Add.1)

17. **The Chairperson** drew attention to aides-memoires 01/09 and 01/09/Add.1, which contained 106 requests for hearings on the questions of Gibraltar, Guam, New Caledonia, the United States Virgin Islands and Western Sahara, and suggested that they should be circulated as Committee documents.

18. *It was so decided.*

19. **The Chairperson** said that he had also received a communication from the Chief Minister of Gibraltar, who wished to make a statement under agenda item 39. That statement would be scheduled accordingly.

The meeting rose at 10.50 a.m.



General Assembly

Sixty-fourth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
9 November 2009

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 2nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 5 October 2009, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)
 later: Mr. Petkus (Vice-Chairperson) (Lithuania)
 later: Mr. Al-Nasser (Chairperson) (Qatar)

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Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other items*)*

Requests for hearings

* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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09-54172 (E)



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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 35: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (A/64/23 and Corr.2, chaps. VII and XII, and A/64/67)

Agenda item 36: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/64/23 and Corr.2, chaps. V and XII)

Agenda item 37: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/64/23 and Corr.2, chaps. VI and XII, and A/64/62)

Agenda item 38: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/64/69 and Corr.1 and 2)

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other items*) (A/64/23 and Corr.1 and 2, chaps. VIII, IX, X, XI and Corr.1 (in Spanish only) and XII, A/64/70 and A/64/185)

1. **Mr. Natalegawa** (Indonesia), speaking as Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and assessing the status of decolonization as the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism drew to a close, said that since the establishment of the United Nations, nearly 750 million people had exercised their right to self-determination, and more than 80 once-colonized Territories had gained independence and become proud members of the Organization. Yet decolonization remained part of the unfinished business of the United Nations, for there were still 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories. The task now was to accelerate their decolonization, and to do so in the context of a changing world, on a case-by-case basis. In some of them, the process of decolonization was already in place; others might in the future be prepared to start the necessary constitutional steps towards a change of status; and in at least one case there had been setbacks. Progress still required the commitment of the entire membership of the United Nations and a collaborative effort by the

international community, the administering Powers and the Territories themselves.

2. The Special Committee's aim was to give all stakeholders a better understanding of the intricacies of conditions on the ground and contemporary dependency dynamics; and it had thus become more engaged in genuine dialogue with all those involved. Having scrutinized its own performance, it had utilized its formal meetings more effectively and had sought to produce action-oriented, up-to-date recommendations on the basis of its monitoring of last-minute developments in a given Territory. It had revamped the format of its annual regional seminars on decolonization so as to focus on a number of cross-cutting issues in the contemporary process of decolonization. Pertinent observations by members of the Special Committee who had attended the 2009 regional seminar in Saint Kitts and Nevis could be found in the annex to chapter II of the Special Committee's report (A/64/23).

3. Just as the Special Committee had taken steps to improve the way it conducted its work, it invited all its partners and all stakeholders in the process of decolonization to do likewise. There was room for improvement in the cooperation by some of the administering Powers with the Special Committee; close cooperation, as exemplified by New Zealand in the case of Tokelau, benefited all concerned and especially the people of the Territories.

4. Education and public outreach remained crucial if the people were to make an informed decision regarding their future political status. Part of the targeted development support for the Territories provided by the United Nations family of agencies, funds and programmes should be the enhancement of the capacity for self-government, as well as assistance in economic and social development, environmental sustainability, health care and good governance. The Special Committee itself had benefited from the input of the various Secretariat departments involved. It would continue to seek guidance from the international community on the future course of action in the process of decolonization.

5. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking as Rapporteur of the Special Committee on Decolonization, introduced the report of the Special Committee (A/64/23 and Corr.2). It reviewed various aspects of the Special Committee's activities during 2009 and its plans for future work; gave an account of the 2009 Caribbean

regional seminar held in Saint Kitts and Nevis; focussed on specific themes in chapters II to VI and on individual situations in Territories in chapters VIII to XI; concluding in chapter XII with its recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the Territories in a series of draft resolutions. He pointed out that new developments in Saint Helena and the Turks and Caicos Islands had necessitated revision (in A/64/23 and Corr.2) of the chapters in draft resolution XI dealing with those Territories.

6. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, for which decolonization and the exercise of the fundamental right to self-determination had always been high priorities, said that colonialism in any form, including economic exploitation, was incompatible with United Nations principles. It was therefore unfortunate that efforts were still needed to do away with it. Effective implementation of the Plan of Action adopted in 2000 for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would speed up the process.

7. The Non-Aligned Movement urged all administering Powers to pay full and fair compensation to the people of the Territories under their control for the economic, social and cultural consequences of their past or current occupation. At the same time, the United Nations must ensure that economic and other activities being carried out by the administering Powers of Non-Self-Governing Territories did not run counter to the interests of the people but instead promoted development and helped them make progress towards self-determination, while safeguarding their cultural identity and their heritage.

8. As a strong supporter of the work of the Special Committee, the Non-Aligned Movement urged administering Powers to cooperate with it and encouraged the Special Committee to continue to work towards full implementation of the Declaration on decolonization and of the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

9. The Movement's position on the question of Puerto Rico remained unchanged and had been outlined most recently at the 2009 Ministerial Meeting of its Coordinating Bureau held in Cuba and its Fifteenth Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Egypt later in the year.

10. *Mr. Petkus (Lithuania), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

11. **Mr. Cancela** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the countries of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and its associated States, reiterated their support for the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands. The Presidents of the member States of MERCOSUR and its associated States had recently reaffirmed that support in a Joint Communiqué, adopted at a meeting of the Council of the Common Market. The Communiqué had also noted that the adoption of unilateral measures was incompatible with United Nations decisions, and that it was in the interests of the whole region for the prolonged sovereignty dispute to be resolved as soon as possible, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly and the declarations of the Organization of American States (OAS), MERCOSUR and other regional and multilateral forums. The inclusion of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands in the list of countries and territories covered by part four of the Treaty establishing the European Community, was incompatible with the existence of a sovereignty dispute.

12. Self-determination was the best way to achieve the decolonization of territories with peoples subjected to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation, as established in resolution 1514 (XV). However, self-determination and decolonization were not synonymous. It had been clearly established in many General Assembly and other resolutions that the principle of self-determination was not applicable to the question of the Malvinas Islands, which constituted a special and particular colonial situation involving a sovereignty dispute, between the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom. Those resolutions had also repeatedly stated that the only way to find a just, peaceful and lasting solution to the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands was through the resumption of negotiations between Argentina and the United Kingdom.

13. MERCOSUR and its associated States recognized the willingness of the Argentine Republic to resume negotiations in order to achieve a rapid solution to the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands, and the surrounding maritime areas, and urged the United Kingdom to comply with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and other international bodies.

14. **Mr. Heller** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said it was important to ensure that all

peoples could exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. While the work of the United Nations had enabled many peoples to gain independence, the fact that there were still 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories on the United Nations list clearly showed that the decolonization process was not over. He reaffirmed the Rio Group's commitment to eradicating colonialism and called upon the administering Powers to adopt the necessary measures to achieve decolonization in all the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, taking into consideration the particular circumstances of each case. He also called upon the administering Powers to cooperate with the Committee and to transmit the information called for under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations.

15. The Group supported the work of the Department of Public Information to disseminate information on the objectives of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, but urged it to redouble its efforts.

16. The Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom must resume their negotiations in order to find a peaceful, just and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, the Special Committee and others, as soon as possible, bearing in mind the principle of territorial integrity.

17. Measures should continue to be taken to promote sustained economic growth in the small island Territories in the Caribbean and Pacific. Special attention should also be paid to the major problems affecting those Territories, including hurricanes and other natural disasters.

18. With regard to Western Sahara, the Rio Group reaffirmed its support for the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and continued to support the efforts of the Secretary-General to reach a fair, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution leading to self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. In that regard, the Group welcomed the recent initial informal preparatory meeting in Austria between the two parties to the dispute under the auspices of the Secretary-General pursuant to the final communiqué of the fourth round of the Manhasset talks, a meeting designed to foster more substantive negotiations in order to achieve a definitive solution through the implementation of

Security Council resolutions 1754 (2007), 1783 (2007), 1813 (2008) and 1871 (2009).

19. **Mr. Bart** (Saint Kitts and Nevis), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), expressed deep concern over the fact that, while internal reforms had been enacted in several of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, very little progress had been made in actual decolonization, which entailed selecting one of the legitimate options for political status, namely, independence, free association or integration. The lack of progress seemed to indicate that decolonization had receded as a United Nations priority. The annual report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, for example, had not made reference to decolonization for a number of years, and the first and only report on the implementation of decolonization (A/64/70) was very summary and incomplete.

20. Recalling the many concerns voiced over the years by CARICOM under the decolonization items, he said that, as the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism drew to a close, the main obstacle was still in its view the inability of the General Assembly to enforce its resolutions. Unless that state of inertia was broken, the world body would be complicit in stymieing the legitimate aspirations of peoples whose fullest human rights had been created to protect.

21. The United Nations must act as a consistent check-and-balance on the administering Powers of the dependent Territories. The current political vacuum had led to an attempt to redefine the non-self-governing status as self-government, the apparent aim being a hurried removal of the remaining dependent Territories from the United Nations list. The international community could not countenance such a position: verifiable attainment of a full measure of self-government, based on the long-standing United Nations criteria in the matter, was what determined whether a Territory was to be removed from United Nations oversight. The United Nations must restart the dormant decolonization process rather than capitulating to dubious arguments that gave political cover to the legitimization of contemporary colonialism and declared decolonization to be complete. Six of the dependent Territories whose peoples would thus be abandoned were in the Caribbean and were full or associate members of CARICOM and its institutions. The Organization's failure to act was thus impeding

regional integration. All the other CARICOM members and many of the other States now present had achieved decolonization through the active support and vigilance of the United Nations; unfortunately, since then such support had significantly declined.

22. The approach to decolonization needed to be fundamentally revamped; there was an urgent need for a special mechanism to conduct, for the first time, a comprehensive review of the implementation of the decolonization mandate that would present a full picture of the current state of affairs. The strategic framework for decolonization and the proposed programme budget for 2010-2011 should also be carefully revised with the aim of achieving real results. CARICOM was willing to work with interested delegations in modernizing the entire decolonization agenda, beginning with the simplification of the lengthy formal name of the Special Committee on decolonization and of agenda item 37 regarding assistance to the Territories by the United Nations system.

23. The political crisis in the Turks and Caicos Islands was deeply disquieting. The decision of the administering Power to replace the elected government with direct rule was a regrettable step backwards for a Territory that was an associate member of CARICOM. The democratic process could never be strengthened by removing representative democracy. The people of the Territory should have been involved through their elected representatives in the efforts needed to strengthen good governance. CARICOM agreed with the Non-Aligned Movement that it was urgent to restore constitutional government there.

24. CARICOM maintained its long-standing support for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, and took note of the consultations held by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General with the parties to the dispute, the neighbouring States and other interested countries in order to find ways of moving the negotiations forward. United Nations agencies were providing welcome humanitarian assistance, especially food aid, in the refugee camps in Western Sahara, yet malnutrition remained a major problem. What was needed was a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, as called for in Security Council resolution 1871 (2009). The African Union had rightly called for an intensification of efforts to hold a referendum that would enable the people of the Territory to choose between the option of independence and that of integration into the Kingdom of Morocco.

25. **Mr. Liu Zhenmin** (China) said that although the Declaration had served to accelerate the process of decolonization across the world, two million people still lived in Non-Self-Governing Territories. It was incumbent upon Member States to help the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration. The Committee had considerable responsibilities and had made vigorous efforts to discharge them, including through the strengthening of its links with Non-Self-Governing Territories.

26. His delegation also looked forward to closer cooperation between the administering Powers and the United Nations. China had consistently supported the efforts of the people of Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination. It would continue to work with the Committee and other Member States to ensure that the goals set forth in the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism were achieved.

27. **Ms. Espinosa** (Ecuador), noting that the principles of territorial integrity, respect for the sovereignty of States and the peaceful settlement of disputes were not only fundamental pillars of her country's foreign policy, but also enshrined in its Constitution, expressed strong support for Argentina's legitimate sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands, and the surrounding maritime areas. The General Assembly and the Special Committee had adopted various resolutions acknowledging that those islands had a special colonial situation that was unlike any others. She urged the United Kingdom to comply with the United Nations call for a just, peaceful and lasting solution to the sovereignty dispute.

28. She reaffirmed her delegation's support for General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) concerning decolonization, in particular the principle of the expression by the Saharan people of their right to self-determination. Ecuador also supported the continuation of negotiations between the *Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro* (Frente Polisario) and the Government of Morocco.

29. The question of Puerto Rico should continue to be addressed, in accordance with the Special Committee's 2009 resolution reaffirming the island's inalienable right to self-determination and independence. She expressed the hope that the Committee's 16 remaining cases of

decolonization could be resolved before the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism in 2010. However, that could not be achieved without the commitment and cooperation of the entire international community.

30. **Mr. Parham** (United Kingdom) said that, where the people of one of the Overseas Territories administered by his Government had clearly and constitutionally opted for independence, it would help them to achieve it. Where instead the Territory wished to retain the link to the United Kingdom, it would safeguard that Territory's future development and continued security, working in partnership with its elected leaders in areas such as good governance, political and economic transparency, enhanced security and disaster mitigation, and holding regular annual political consultations with them.

31. The Territorial constitutions governed the relationship between the United Kingdom and its Overseas Territories, and his Government regularly updated them, carefully considering all proposals for constitutional change received from the Territories. New constitutions had come into force in the Turks and Caicos Islands and Gibraltar in 2006, in the British Virgin Islands in 2007 and in the Falkland Islands and St. Helena in 2009, and would do so the following month in the Cayman Islands.

32. Maintaining high standards of probity and governance was a cornerstone of British administration of the Territories. His Government was committed to allowing each Territory to run its own affairs responsibly as far as possible, but when developments in a Territory gave cause for concern or a Territory failed to fulfil international obligations, the United Kingdom would not hesitate to raise the matter with the Territorial government and intervene where necessary. That had been the case in the Turks and Caicos Islands: in 2008 an independent commission of inquiry looking into evidence of corruption or poor management by elected members of the Territory's legislature had reported dire financial mismanagement and made over 60 recommendations covering systemic weaknesses, criminal sanctions, public integrity and land allocation, sale and management. In August 2009, his Government had consequently instructed the Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands to suspend the government and legislature and automatic right to trial by jury. The decision to do so had not been taken lightly. The suspension would last for a period of up to two years to

allow the Governor to restore good governance, sustainable development and sound financial management to the Islands while he worked under an interim constitution with an advisory council to formulate policy and a consultative forum to allow the people's voice to be heard. It remained Britain's intention that elections should be held in July 2011, if not sooner.

33. The British Government continued to encourage all its Overseas Territories to meet internationally recognized Group of Twenty (G-20) standards to ensure sound financial regulation and economic management. Thus far, three of the seven Overseas Territories with financial centres — Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands — were now on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) list of jurisdictions that had fully implemented internationally agreed tax standards. The United Kingdom was also working with the Territorial governments to ensure that their public finances could handle economic shocks and that their fiscal policy included a clear strategy for cutting levels of debt before they did any further borrowing.

34. **Mr. Valero Briceño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) observed that there were still instances in the American hemisphere of Territories subject to colonial domination or occupation by foreign Powers. The work of the Special Committee was especially important in advancing the decolonization of the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories worldwide.

35. His Government firmly supported the self-determination of peoples, especially in the case of the Malvinas Islands, Puerto Rico and Western Sahara. It endorsed Argentina's legitimate sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and their surrounding maritime areas. It also supported the inalienable right of Puerto Rico to self-determination as a distinct Latin American and Caribbean nation. The Non-Aligned Movement at its 2009 summit had called upon the United States Government to encourage the Puerto Rican people to progress towards self-determination and independence. At the same time, the United States Government should return all occupied territory and installations built in Vieques and Ceiba to the people of Puerto Rico, and release political prisoners who had been jailed because they had fought for their nation's independence.

36. Venezuela recognized the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic and supported the self-determination of the

Saharawi people. It had concluded three cooperation agreements with that country relating to foreign affairs, finance, communication and information, and public policy, and would be concluding five others in the areas of health and education.

37. **Mr. Sangqu** (South Africa) observed that his own delegation would not be represented in the United Nations had it not been for the commendable efforts of the Special Committee on behalf of those who lived under colonial domination and foreign occupation. He expressed concern that in the last remaining colony on the African continent, the people of Western Sahara were still struggling for self-determination, an inalienable right consistently recognized by the General Assembly. The continuing occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco challenged the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the authority and credibility of the Organization. South Africa endorsed the position of the African Union that the right of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence was not negotiable; it did not recognize Morocco's sovereignty over the Territory, and saw its presence there as a continued occupation. A United Nations-supervised referendum would give the Saharawi people the possibility of freely choosing their future status. His Government supported the Secretary-General's efforts to find a mutually acceptable political solution and urged the Government of Morocco and the Saharawi people as represented by the Frente Polisario to work with the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to resolve their differences and break the impasse. The round of negotiations launched in 2007 could produce positive results.

38. The Secretary-General should investigate the reports of human rights violations in Western Sahara and every effort should be made to restore the dignity of the Saharawi people. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was crucial to the peace process.

39. *Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) resumed the Chair.*

40. **Mr. Benítez Verson** (Cuba) observed that decolonization must continue to be a United Nations priority. The Special Committee on Decolonization was doing serious work with the administering Powers, the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and Member States in fostering dialogue. Yet it was a matter of concern that some administering Powers were not cooperating with the Special Committee, in violation of their Charter obligations to do so.

41. The situation in the Turks and Caicos islands, where the administering Power had suspended parts of the constitution, was worrisome and it was urgent to re-establish the constitutional order there.

42. Despite the endorsement of the Special Committee in successive resolutions, the people of Puerto Rico, while defending their identity as a nation, had not yet been able to exercise their right to decide whether they wanted to be an independent and sovereign State. The Special Committee had expressly requested the General Assembly to consider the question of Puerto Rico in all its aspects, and the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement maintained that the question of Puerto Rico was a colonial issue and that the United States had an obligation to accelerate the process of independence.

43. The people of Western Sahara also had a right to determine their own future. There had been four rounds of negotiations in the last few years between the two parties to the dispute under the auspices of the Secretary-General, and efforts to guarantee self-determination were ongoing.

44. Cuba fully supported the legitimate sovereignty of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands as part of that country's national territory. It called for a negotiated, just and final solution to that question.

45. Cuba had recently offered scholarships to 13 more students from Non-Self-Governing Territories, in addition to the more than 500 currently studying and receiving training in Cuba. Other Member States in a position to do so should also provide such facilities. In addition, the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations could offer very beneficial assistance to the Territories. If all Member States worked together, colonialism could be a thing of the past.

46. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) said that the United Nations had had some of its greatest successes in the area of decolonization, yet some situations remained unresolved. All Member States involved must allow the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to freely express their will.

47. The question of Western Sahara was of particular concern to Senegal, which shared a common history and enjoyed good relations with the Kingdom of Morocco. The painful situation in Western Sahara was satisfactory to neither of the parties directly concerned. Senegal firmly supported the Moroccan proposal to

grant broad autonomy to the Saharan region within the framework of the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Morocco. That realistic, reasonable proposal offered the best prospects for a political, final and mutually acceptable solution to the question of Western Sahara. Senegal was dedicated to strengthening the brotherly relations among all the countries of the Maghreb and of the African continent as a whole. It considered it imperative to discourage all forms of separatism and prevent any breakdown of the social fabric in the Maghreb.

48. His delegation thus supported the laudable initiatives of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, who continued to hold in-depth consultations on the current positions of the parties and ways of moving into a more intensive phase of negotiation on substantive questions. Senegal hoped that the four rounds of negotiations begun under the auspices of the previous Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General would be carried forward in the form of direct talks.

49. Both parties had to show a spirit of compromise and enter into the negotiations in good faith so as not to lose the momentum towards a settlement in accordance with the Charter. It was necessary, as the Personal Envoy had argued, for the Security Council to become more involved and give clearer direction so as to ensure the stability, integration and development of the region and allow Saharawi refugees to live a normal life in their own land.

50. **Mr. Muburi-Muita** (Kenya) said that, at the close of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, collaborative efforts to decolonize the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories must be redoubled. The Special Committee, whose work Kenya unequivocally supported, must pursue genuine dialogue aimed at finding concrete and more creative ways of eradicating colonialism, and the administering Powers of the Territories must cooperate, facilitating United Nations missions to the Territories, regularly transmitting information on conditions there, promoting their advancement without depleting the resources that were their birthright, and helping them to conserve their cultural identity through restitution of cultural properties.

51. On the question of Western Sahara, Kenya supported the continuing negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General as the only path towards a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution.

52. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia) deplored the fact that colonialism was still an issue with which the Committee was forced to deal; that was a serious indictment of United Nations resolve. Namibia called upon the administering Powers to speed up the process of granting independence and self-determination to the dependent Territories and urged the United Nations and especially the Fourth Committee to leave no stone unturned in its own efforts to end abhorrent foreign occupation.

53. Namibia was deeply concerned over the continuous occupation of Palestinian land. One had to question the value of so many General Assembly and Security Council resolutions if they could not be implemented. The people of Palestine must be guaranteed their inalienable rights to self-determination and statehood. Israel must cease all illegal activities, lift its unjust siege of the Gaza Strip, and instead promote peaceful negotiations based on those resolutions and the Quartet road map as the only viable option for a two-State solution. As to Western Sahara, his Government urged the United Nations to assume its full responsibility, and believed MINURSO should be strengthened so that it could monitor the ceasefire and any human rights violations. The United Nations plan for holding a free and fair referendum in the Territory should be immediately and unconditionally implemented. Namibia stood in solidarity with the peoples of those two Territories in their just quest for freedom, independence and social justice.

54. **Mr. Kleib** (Indonesia) said that, as a nation that had emerged from colonialism through a hard-fought struggle for independence, Indonesia would continue to work constructively to accelerate the process of decolonization within the framework of the United Nations. The right to self-determination and the respect for the territorial integrity of a Member State were fundamental to decolonization. Any subsequent course of action must build on the previous deliberations and decisions of the General Assembly.

55. Decolonization was first and foremost a political process. While progress in the economic and social fields was welcome, it did not obviate the need to reach a permanent political solution freely determined by the people in each Territory in accordance with United Nations principles.

56. The Special Committee had a central role in the decolonization process, and all Member States,

particularly the administering Powers which had not done so, and the agencies and institutions within the United Nations system, should lend their full support to its work. As the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism drew to a close, the General Assembly should consider the launching of a third decade, equipped with a feasible, action-oriented and measurable plan of action.

57. **Mr. Santos** (Timor-Leste) said that his country, from the similar vantage point of a colonial past, had closely followed the question of Western Sahara for decades. Both countries had been colonized by Iberian Powers, had been identified by the United Nations as being ready for decolonization, and had been invaded by their immediate neighbours after the European withdrawal at around the same period, in 1975; both had been subjected to widespread human rights abuses and caught up in global political trends that were not of their making. A strong friendship and solidarity had grown between the Timorese people and the Saharawi people during the independence struggles, yet whereas Timor-Leste had achieved self-determination in 1999 under United Nations supervision, Western Sahara inexplicably had not yet done so.

58. As in his own country in the past, arguments were being put forward that Western Sahara was not economically viable. Colonizers always bent the truth to suit their political imperatives and the fact that they had the upper hand in resources, geopolitical power and foreign support further benefited them. Timor-Leste called for strict enforcement of the right of Saharawis to self-determination. There should be no illusion that peace would thrive on the basis of injustice.

59. His Government fully supported the efforts of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to find a just and acceptable solution to the long conflict, and it commended the Austrian Government for facilitating talks between representatives of the two parties to the conflict. It was, however, greatly concerned about the human rights abuses being committed against the Saharawi people in occupied Western Sahara. All parties must honour their commitment to human rights and abide by their obligations under international law.

60. **Mr. Rugunda** (Uganda) expressed concern that the process of decolonization had not yet been brought to a successful conclusion. The founding fathers of the African Union had made great efforts to decolonize

Africa and had achieved good results. Yet the question of Western Sahara remained unresolved, and it must be given the attention it deserved by all Member States. Only the Saharawi people could and should decide their own destiny, without conditions of any kind. It was encouraging that the parties to the conflict had reaffirmed their intention to continue the rounds of negotiations of the last few years under the auspices of the Secretary-General and had in fact presented separate proposals to the Secretary-General in 2007. He commended the efforts of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to work on the basis of Security Council resolution 1871 (2009) and earlier resolutions, welcomed the meetings being held to move the process of negotiation into a fifth round and urged both parties to work hard to overcome their differences in order to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that would enable the people of Western Sahara to exercise their right to self-determination.

61. At the same time, Uganda was concerned over the reported violations of human rights in Western Sahara, but was reassured that the Secretary-General had affirmed the United Nations commitment to upholding international human rights standards there. There had been reports for some time of the illegal exploitation of the resources of Western Sahara, and that too must be addressed.

Rights of reply

62. **Mr. Parham** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to statements made by the delegations of Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay and Venezuela (the Bolivarian Republic of) regarding the issue of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, reiterated his Government's well-known position that the United Kingdom had no doubts about its sovereignty over the Territory and that there could be no negotiations on sovereignty unless and until the Islanders themselves so wished.

63. In reply to the statement by the representatives of Saint Kitts and Nevis and Cuba regarding the suspension of the Territorial government of the Turks and Caicos Islands, he reiterated that the British Government had carefully weighed that constitutional measure, that the suspension was intended to allow the Governor to restore good governance, sustainable development and sound financial management, and that the plan was to hold elections in July 2011, if not sooner.

64. **Mr. Díaz Bartolomé** (Argentina) said, in response to remarks made by the United Kingdom delegation, that his Government considered the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and their surrounding maritime areas an integral part of the territory of Argentina. Because they had been illegally occupied by the United Kingdom, they were the subject of a sovereignty dispute between the two countries. Various international organizations and the General Assembly in a number of resolutions had recognized the disputed sovereignty — as had the Special Committee and the Organization of American States — and the two Governments had been urged to resume negotiations to settle the dispute.

Requests for hearings

65. **The Chairperson** drew attention to 95 requests for hearings under agenda item 39, relating to Gibraltar (A/C.4/64/2), Guam (A/C.4/64/3 and Add.1-7), the United States Virgin Islands (A/C.4/64/4 and Add.1), Western Sahara (A/C.4/64/5 and Add.1-83), and New Caledonia (A/C.4/64/6). He took it that the Committee wished to grant those requests.

66. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.



General Assembly

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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 3rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 6 October 2009, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)
later: Mrs. Schroderus-Fox (Vice-Chairperson) (Finland)
later: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)
later: Mr. Petkus (Vice-Chairperson) (Lithuania)

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Agenda item 38: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*)*

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Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (*continued*)

Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and petitioners

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 35: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/64/23 and A/64/23/Corr.2 (chaps. VII and XII) and A/64/67)

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Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and petitioners

Question of New Caledonia (A/C.4/64/6)

1. **The Chairperson** said that, in line with the Committee's usual practice, representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and petitioners would be invited to address the Committee and would withdraw after making their statements.

2. **Mr. Gomes** (President of the Government, New Caledonia), after reviewing the salient points of the Nouméa Accord, said that it provided for the emancipation of New Caledonia through a sharing of sovereignty with France. Such shared sovereignty also gave New Caledonia an international role. It was a full member of the Pacific Islands Forum and of the Melanesian Spearhead Group and it maintained representations in the Pacific area. The Government had decided to report the country each year to the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and to the Fourth Committee on the situation in the country. As part of its international outreach, New Caledonia would continue to participate in the annual seminars of the Special Committee. In that regard, it wished to host the 2010 regional seminar on decolonization.

3. The Matignon and Nouméa Accords had created an enabling environment for more equitable economic and social development and for restoring the balance between the different provinces. Indeed, the provinces owned large stakes in major iron and nickel concerns, and following major efforts to restore balance in land ownership, half of the traditional lands were now owned by the Kanak people. Many measures had been taken to ensure that Kanak identity was taken more broadly into account, including through the restoration of Kanak place names, the introduction of Kanak languages in schools and the presentation of traditional knowledge.

4. Much work remained to be done in terms of education, addressing social inequality, ensuring equitable development across all provinces, and helping young people — some of whom were grappling with alcohol and drug abuse — to fit into the modern world. Referring to paragraph 11 of General Assembly resolution 63/106, he said that he had invited all the pro- and anti-independence advocates to begin discussions with a view to holding during the fourth (five-year) term of the Congress (between 2014 and 2019) of the referendum provided for under the Nouméa Accord.

5. **Ms. Lauouvea** (Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste (FLNKS)) said that the Nouméa Accord was a decolonization agreement, which would lead to the fullest form of autonomy for New Caledonia under the French Republic. That minimum consensus should undergird all public policies and actions. Since the Nouméa Accord provided for a transfer of powers to New Caledonia, the Territory's governance would have to be improved to give New Caledonians full ownership of decision-making. In that regard, New Caledonia's human resources needed to be developed.

6. In order to ensure that the country's development was sustainable, its economy would have to be diversified, including through the use of earnings from nickel, which could also be used to address imbalances

in provincial development. There were also problems with respect to financing for development and to the implementation of structural reforms designed to put public finances on a sound footing. The uneven distribution of wealth was also of great concern; over a quarter of the population lived below the poverty threshold and many did not have decent housing.

7. FLNKS continued to promote the idea of sharing a common destiny, which might become a nationality, should New Caledonians so decide. In 1998, New Caledonians had accepted the challenge of showing that decolonization could proceed democratically and peacefully. However, that process required the development of transparent public policies. She therefore called on the United Nations, five years prior to the referendum on self-determination provided for under the Accord, to assist the country in assessing its public policies to ensure that the hopes raised by the Nouméa Accord would not be dashed.

Question of the United States Virgin Islands (A/C.4/64/4 and Add.1)

8. **Mr. Browne**, speaking in his personal capacity, said that the failure to end slavery at the moment of transfer of the Danish West Indies was a wrong that must be corrected and for which an apology must be made. In that regard, he called on the Danish and United States authorities to establish a truth and reconciliation commission to address the historical inaccuracies and concerns raised by many individuals both in Denmark and the United States Virgin Islands. The elderly inhabitants of the United States Virgin Islands deserved a dignified resolution to their status. It was in the best interest of humanity that there should be reconciliation between the peoples of the Virgin Islands, Denmark and the United States of America. Governments around the world should work more aggressively to abolish the terrible systems of slavery and colonialism.

9. **Mrs. Schroderus-Fox** (Finland), *Vice-Chairperson*, took the Chair.

10. **Mr. James II** (Fifth Constitutional Convention of the United States Virgin Islands) said that the work of the Constitutional Convention — especially the drafting process and the launch of the critical education phase — had been considerably hampered by a lack of resources. In that regard, he trusted that, should the administering Power be unwilling to provide assistance

consistent with Article 73 *b* of the Charter of the United Nations, it would facilitate access by the Territory to United Nations electoral assistance.

11. Reviewing the provisions of the draft constitution, he noted that it provided, *inter alia*, for a broader definition of a native Virgin Islander as having been born in the territory or as being a descendant of a native-born person. The reference to native Virgin Islanders in the constitution was vital given the fact that the Territory's native-born population was on the decline; according to the most recent figures, they accounted for 51.3 per cent of the population. That decline had significant implications for the self-identity of the people. Related provision were that only ancestral or native Virgin Islanders could be appointed as governor or lieutenant governor and that ancestral Virgin Islanders should be exempt from property tax. He wanted to know why similar provisions on native rights were part of the constitutions of other United States-administered Non-Self-Governing Territories yet appeared to be objectionable to certain interests in the case of the Virgin Islands.

12. The Fifth Constitutional Convention was confident that it would win the suit it had filed in the Territory's Superior Court against the Governor's unilateral decision not to transmit the draft constitution to the administering Power on the grounds that some provisions thereof were inconsistent with the United States Constitution as it applied to the Territory, thus paving the way for the Territory's next step along the path towards a full measure of self-government.

Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/64/5, A/C.4/64/5/Add.1-9, 13-21, 36, 38, 54, 58)

13. **Ms. Huff** (Teach the Children International) said that five concrete steps could be taken to make a difference in the lives of thousands of Saharawi people living in camps in Algeria and Morocco. They included continuing dialogue between the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguía el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente Polisario) and Morocco; promoting the economic development of the disputed area; collecting accurate data, including a head count on the Saharawi situation; investigating human rights violations, including slavery, forced detention, restriction of movement and denial of work; and the adoption of the proposed autonomy plan. Although in the past she had worked in support of the referendum, she now urged the Committee to endorse the autonomy plan so that the

Saharawi people could begin immediately to interact with the rest of the world.

14. **Ms. Farish** (Attorney at Law) said that the question of the Saharawi people had taken on new importance with recent reports that they were becoming targets for Al-Qaida recruitment. She suggested that the Saharawi people might benefit from a "dependent sovereign" status similar to that enjoyed by Native Americans in the United States of America. A gradual approach to independence was best. If the Frente Polisario or the Saharawi Arab Democratic Republic (SADR) wished to speak for the Saharawi people, they needed to demonstrate a clean human rights record, transparent finances, a readiness to compromise and a willingness to allow a census to be taken by neutral experts. The Committee should consider making further aid and further negotiations conditional on those factors. As part of the confidence-building measures programme, family visits by land should be permitted in addition to the existing family visits by air.

15. **Ms. Basinet**, speaking in her personal capacity, said that, as a community that lived "off the grid", the Saharawi people could benefit greatly from solar energy. There were a number of innovative, inexpensive and easily assembled solar devices that had been used successfully in places like Ethiopia and Afghanistan and could help the Saharawi people take part in development.

16. **Ms. Banda** (Christ the Rock Community Church) said that in lieu of criticizing the United Nations failure to enforce the Saharawi people's right to self-determination, she would offer unfiltered eyewitness testimony. She read two autobiographical accounts by refugees describing their lifelong yearning for a homeland, their harsh living conditions, and their disappointment with the bad faith of both Morocco and the United Nations in postponing the referendum.

17. **Ms. Lenz** (Not Forgotten International) said that she had been working in refugee camps for 10 years. She read several letters from refugee children describing their harsh living conditions and their yearning for a homeland.

18. **Ms. Stanley**, speaking in her personal capacity, said that it would be inhumane to ignore the Saharawi people's cries for self-determination any longer.

19. **Mr. Stanley** (RockFish Church) said that it was high time that the United Nations honoured its promise, pursuant to the Declaration on decolonization, by organizing a referendum in Western Sahara to allow the people of that Territory to express their right to self-determination.

20. **Mr. Kustusch**, speaking in his personal capacity, said that on his recent trip to SADR, he had learned that the Saharawi people were well equipped to build a viable State that would be a good neighbour to Morocco and a constructive member of the international community. Against all odds, the refugees had built infrastructure, services, an educational system, a health-care system and a professional army and police. Although not perfect, the Frente Polisario government-in-exile was more democratic than the Governments of many States Members of the United Nations. He urged Morocco to acknowledge, and the United Nations to enforce, the principle of decolonization provided for in the Charter of the United Nations.

21. **Monsignor Abboud**, speaking in his personal capacity, expressed support for the efforts of the international community to resolve the conflict in the Western Sahara as well as for the autonomy plan. He then quoted from the testimony of Abdel Jalil Ould Khouna, a Mauritanian, and former member of the Frente Polisario, who had been accused of collaborating with the French and Mauritanian secret services, imprisoned for five years in the Tindouf camps, and tortured so badly that he had lost the use of his right arm. That testimony, along with many others, had been delivered to the Office of the Secretary-General the previous year, along with a demand that an international investigation be opened into such documented serious human rights violations as kidnapping, arbitrary arrest, torture, genocide and violence against women committed by the Frente Polisario.

22. He reminded the parties involved in the rounds of negotiations that the International Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights were applicable to the Western Sahara conflict, which would be resolved only after equitable compensation had been paid to the victims of human rights violations and the perpetrators of such violations had been prosecuted.

23. *Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar), Chairperson, resumed the Chair.*

24. **Ms. Stevens** (Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights), speaking on behalf of Ms. Aminatou Haidar, 2008 Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights Award laureate, said that the Moroccan Government had committed gross human rights abuses against Saharawis because of their participation in peaceful demonstrations in support of self-determination. Repressive measures had included killings, kidnapping, forced disappearances, torture, curtailing freedom of expression and denial of medical treatment. She deplored the complete silence of the international community in the face of those violations.

25. Saharawi human rights organizations had not been allowed to register and thus to organize meetings. Students had been prevented from travelling to participate in a conflict resolution programme. She called upon the Organization to expand the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) and appealed to it to take measures to ensure respect for the dignity and fundamental human rights of the Saharawi people by Morocco.

26. **Ms. Nedrebo** (United Nations Association of the United States of America) expressed full support for the United Nations efforts in the Western Sahara and hoped that they would culminate in the exercise by the people of Western Sahara of their right to self-determination in a free and fair referendum. The mandate of MINURSO should be extended to cover human rights in the areas where it was deployed.

27. Her Association had been supporting Saharawi refugees in many ways, including through a library project designed to expand opportunities for knowledge and research and through the provision of access to technology and information for Saharawi women in the refugee camps in Algeria.

28. **Ms. García Díaz** (Fundación Sahara Occidental) read out a declaration adopted unanimously by all the assemblies and parliaments of Spain. The declaration congratulated the Saharan people and their sole legitimate representative, the Frente Polisario, for both their endurance and openness to dialogue; welcomed the Manhasset rounds of talks and urged international organizations, especially the United Nations, through the Security Council and the European Union, to assume Spain's responsibilities in the matter, so that

the necessary conditions could be created for the holding of a referendum on self-determination; condemned all human rights violations in the Territory; called for the release of all the reports produced by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation in Moroccan-occupied Western Sahara; urged the Fourth Committee to formally declare the Western Sahara an "occupied territory" to which international humanitarian law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, would be applicable; called upon the Secretary-General to expand the mandate of MINURSO to cover human rights. Furthermore, it urged the European Union to denounce the flagrant violations of international human rights law by Morocco in the Territory; urged the European Union not to enter into agreements with Morocco on the exploitation of the natural resources of Western Sahara, since such agreements would be inconsistent with international law. Lastly, neither Spain nor any member of the European Union should sell arms to Morocco.

29. **Mr. Loza Aguirre** (Member of the Basque Parliament) expressed the hope that the decolonization of Western Sahara would soon be completed. Describing a recent visit to Laayoune, he noted that the Moroccans there were either fervent advocates of their country's claim to Western Sahara as a southern province or were in internal exile as punishment, reminiscent of Franco-era Spain. Western Saharans, on the other hand, were considered strangers in their own land and were ordered to keep their identity as a people to themselves. Any manifestation of such identity in public was violently suppressed. Those who were mistreated for exercising their rights were warned against reporting those violations. Nevertheless, the majority still wished to exercise their right to self-determination.

30. Those violations occurred despite the presence of the United Nations in the Territory. The Moroccan Government refused to recognize and to register several Saharawi human rights associations, even after it had been ordered by the courts to do so. He called on the United Nations to protect the basic rights of the people of Western Sahara to life, physical integrity, and to form associations recognized under Moroccan law. The Organization should also ensure the decolonization of Western Sahara.

31. **Mr. López Ortiz** (Federación Estatal de Instituciones Solidarias con el Pueblo Saharaui) said

that the mandate of MINURSO should be expanded to include the protection of the human rights of the Western Saharan people who, as long as Morocco mocked United Nations agreements and international law, would never be able to exercise their right to self-determination.

32. The only just and lasting solution to the conflict would be to give the Saharan people the opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination through a referendum, in the presence of observers. Although that was the goal pursued under the Settlement Plan, the Houston Agreements and the Baker Plan, the international community was too tolerant of the intransigence on the part of Morocco and its illegal occupation and exploitation of the Territory's resources, including its fisheries. The European Union was clearly guilty of that policy of appeasement towards Morocco.

33. Noting that Spain, which was still the administering Power of Western Sahara, would soon take over the rotating presidency of the European Union, he appealed to its Government, given its historic and moral responsibilities in the matter, to spearhead the search for a just and lasting solution to the conflict.

34. The peace and security of the whole of North-West Africa were at stake. The time had come to impose a solution. If the Security Council could not offer any other alternatives to the Baker Plan, then it should move from Chapter VI to Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations in order to ensure that the heroic people of Western Sahara, who had suffered so much, could live in peace and dignity and freely determine their own future.

35. **Ms. Alt-Baala** (Action Internationale Femmes), noting that a more realistic approach should be taken to that thorny issue, said that the initiative of negotiating an autonomy status for the Sahara region would open a new chapter in the region's history. The international community should back that effort in order to put an end to some 34 years of suffering, of some 50,000 people living on humanitarian assistance in terrible conditions in the camps in Algeria. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees must discharge its duty and conduct a census. If the international community could not guarantee the refugees' right of return or their security or basic

human rights, then it should seriously consider moving them to another State altogether.

36. While the international community should not forget the direct victims of the conflict, it should also bear in mind that there were collateral victims, including 350,000 Moroccans who had been summarily deported from Algeria in 1975 in retaliation for the Green March, and 210 forced disappearances. It was absolutely imperative that the United Nations put an end to the conflict in the region so that the parties concerned could focus on strengthening the Arab Maghreb Union.

37. **Mr. Briones Vives** (International Association of Jurists for Western Sahara) said that the issue was definitely a matter of decolonization and that Morocco was occupying territory it had invaded. Its claims were illegitimate and a referendum on self-determination must not be subject to a prior agreement between the Saharan people and Morocco. Morocco must comply with the general principles of international law, including the principle of the erga omnes right to self-determination.

38. *Mr. Petkus (Lithuania), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

39. **Mr. Debeche**, speaking in his personal capacity as a Professor of Political Science at the University of Algiers, said that the Moroccan autonomy plan was an old colonial tactic designed to perpetuate occupation under another name. It was highly ironic that in 1991 the Moroccan army had fought alongside allied forces for the liberation of Kuwait from Iraqi occupation while Morocco was itself already occupying the Western Sahara. Morocco had taken a number of other contradictory positions. It had divided Western Sahara with Mauritania and built a 2,400 km wall dividing the Territory into two, both tacit admissions that the Territory was not Moroccan. It had been willing to recognize Mauritanian independence after initially claiming Mauritania as part of Morocco. It had even recognized the right of Western Sahara to independence prior to its 1975 invasion. Morocco had no reason to fear an independent Western Sahara. The Frente Polisario had repeatedly declared its intention to be a constructive neighbour to Morocco, and SADR was already a founding member of the African Union.

40. **Ms. Boulmerka**, speaking in her personal capacity as an Olympic champion, said that it particularly pained her that young Saharawi athletes

could not aspire to represent their people in international competition. She urged the Committee to take prompt action to free the Saharawi people from Moroccan colonialism.

41. **Mr. Machín**, speaking in his personal capacity, said that the problem of Western Sahara had been created by the Franco regime in Spain and exploited by Morocco in order to expand its territory. Algeria, Morocco, the United Nations and the Arab Maghreb Union needed to negotiate a solution that established Western Sahara as an autonomous region with a status similar to that of the Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands, which could be a first step to integration into a more decentralized North African community. It would also be necessary to resolve the problems of the Saharan population as a whole within a democratic framework ensuring full respect of their human rights.

42. Although there were considerable vested interests that would oppose any such proposals, the proposals would by and large satisfy key requirements of all the interested parties. For instance, they should be welcomed by Morocco, because its territorial integrity would be safeguarded; Algeria would be relieved that an independent State, which might incite separatism among Algerian Saharans, would not be established in the region; Tunisia, Libya and Mauritania would welcome the removal of a major obstacle to the Arab Maghreb Union; the European Union would welcome greater stability in North Africa that would absorb some of the migratory pressure from sub-Saharan Africa; while the United Nations would have settled yet another international conflict.

43. **Mr. Hamoudi**, speaking in his personal capacity, said that even though there was no country in the world that recognized Moroccan sovereignty over Western Sahara and even though both the United Nations General Assembly and the International Court of Justice had recognized the right of the Saharawi people to self-determination, nothing was being done to advance Saharawi independence. Hundreds of thousands of Saharawis, including his own family, continued to live in deplorable conditions in Algeria, while those in Moroccan-occupied areas were subject to degrading human rights abuses. If there was any reason for a Special Political and Decolonization Committee to exist, it was to ensure the right of self-determination in cases such as that of the Saharawi

people. They should be allowed to express their will immediately in a free, fair and democratic referendum.

44. **Lord Newall** (International Committee for Tindouf Prisoners) said that the Tindouf camps were concentration camps where prisoners were held in squalid conditions by Algeria as a bargaining chip. The United Nations should be doing more to collect information on those who had perished in those camps and on children who had been sent thousands of miles away from their homes for "education". Only after people were freed from those prison camps could Morocco and Algeria begin meaningful negotiations.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.

**General Assembly**

Sixty-fourth session

Official Records

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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee)****Summary record of the 4th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 7 October 2009, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)**Contents**Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to
Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*)
(*continued*)*Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and petitioners*

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other agenda items*) (continued) (A/64/23 and Corr.2 (chaps. VIII, IX and X), A/64/185)

Hearing of representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and petitioners

1. **The Chairman** said that in line with the Committee's usual practice, representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and petitioners would be invited to address the Committee and would withdraw after making their statements.

Question of Gibraltar (A/C.4/64/2)

2. **Mr. Caruana** (Chief Minister, Gibraltar) said that on the basis of a 1713 treaty which had been consigned to the dustbin of history, Spain asserted that the decolonization of Gibraltar could mean only the transfer of its sovereignty by the United Kingdom to Spain, against the wishes of the people of Gibraltar and in violation of their rights. The people of Gibraltar would never agree to such an anachronism, nor could Spain's position be supported objectively under international law. It was therefore little wonder that Spain rejected the referral of the question to the International Court of Justice for an advisory opinion. The sovereignty of Gibraltar was neither the United Kingdom's to give away, nor Spain's to demand; nor was Gibraltar a part of Spain, and its self-determination therefore did not affect Spain's territorial integrity.

3. The Special Committee on Decolonization had taken to fabricating extraordinary and untenable rules, such as its suspension of the principle of self-determination for Territories affected by a sovereignty dispute. The people of Gibraltar had therefore been obliged to bypass the Special Committee and secure decolonization by other means. In doing so, they had relied on General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV), which provided that the emergence into any political status suitable to a Territory's circumstances that was freely determined by the people of the Territory constituted an act of self-determination.

4. The decolonization of Gibraltar had already taken place not only in practice but also in law, by virtue of Gibraltar's Constitution. Gibraltar was a democratic, modern, prosperous and self-governing country. The

idea that its status could be the subject of a deal between two other States was untenable, as was Spain's sovereignty claim, which lay outside the competence of the Special Committee. Yet the so-called consensus decision implied that the sovereignty of Gibraltar could be ceded against the wishes of its inhabitants. Indeed, that decision did not even reflect a consensus between the United Kingdom and Spain; the United Kingdom had stated that it would never discuss the issue without Gibraltar's consent, and that consent would never be forthcoming. He hoped that the representative of the United Kingdom would deliver the same clear message at the current session, and urged the Committee not to waste time adopting political resolutions on the basis of false premises. He stressed instead that the recently initiated trilateral Dialogue Forum was the only viable way forward. In July 2009, a third ministerial meeting had taken place between him and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the United Kingdom and Spain, the latter of whom had made a historic and unprecedented visit to Gibraltar. The Government of Gibraltar was enduringly committed to those discussions.

5. Finally, he noted that it was counterproductive for Spain to maintain its belligerent stance in such areas as the provocation of physical encounters in waters under the authority of Gibraltar; litigation at the level of the European Union, apparently with the sole aim of undermining Gibraltar's economy; and the use of regional and environmental protection measures as a means for Spain to pursue its sovereignty claim.

6. **Mr. Bossano** (Leader of the Opposition, Parliament of Gibraltar) said that he opposed the futile consensus decision, which Spain took as an endorsement of its position, and maintained that decolonization could only mean Gibraltar becoming Spanish. The United Kingdom argued that any agreement was subject to the consent of the people of Gibraltar, while knowing that such consent would never be forthcoming.

7. In March 2009, the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Parliament of Spain had approved a consensus decision of its own, requesting its Government to continue to negotiate with the United Kingdom the text of the consensus decision submitted to the General Assembly that was prepared annually by the United Kingdom and Spain in the vain hope that the people of Gibraltar might accept it.

8. The United Kingdom argued that Gibraltar and its other overseas territories should be removed from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories. That view was based on a re-engineered constitutional relationship enacted not by the colonies but by the colonial Power. However, in the case of the Turks and Caicos Islands, the United Kingdom had unilaterally terminated precisely such a relationship on 14 August 2009. The United Kingdom was still the administering Power, and the criteria of the Charter of the United Nations continued to apply. He opposed the manufactured consensus of the United Kingdom and Spain, and the United Kingdom position that the criteria derived from the Charter of the United Nations were not applicable, as well as the United Kingdom's policy of not engaging with the Special Committee on Decolonization.

9. He supported the report on the Caribbean Regional Seminar, held in St. Kitts and Nevis in May 2009, contained in the annex to the report of the Special Committee (A/64/23). In particular, he welcomed the suggestion that an assessment of the current stage of decolonization and self-determination in each Non-Self-Governing Territory could serve as a checklist or benchmark on progress to date and what remained to be done. The policy of welcoming participation from all stakeholders allowed the Committee to hear a full range of views, and did credit to the openness of the United Nations, even if the peoples concerned often felt that their views were not taken into account.

10. The consensus decision was a waste of time; the people of Gibraltar would not rest until their nation and identity gained international recognition. Spain's illogical arguments could only result in the replacement of a colonial master with a worse one.

Question of Guam (A/C.4/64/3 and Add.1-6)

11. **Mr. Tuncap** (Pacific Islands Studies Programme, University of California Berkeley) called on the United Nations to recognize the inalienable right to self-determination of the Chamoru people in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 1541 (XV) and with the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The continued occupation of Guam and the Northern Marianas Islands by the United States military was rooted in a system of racial inequality between the settlers of those islands and the native Chamoru people. Since their initial contact with

the United States in 1898, the Chamoru people had been prevented from exercising their inalienable human rights by massive pacification and military occupation. Militarized conditions continued to characterize the institutions defining American citizenship for many people in the Pacific and Caribbean colonies.

12. The military build-up on the island had grave implications for its indigenous people. The United States asserted that its citizens had a right to vote in a decolonization plebiscite, yet indigenous people were denied the right to vote in United States elections. The largest barrier reef system of Guam had been destroyed by military dumping and nuclear testing. United States Army installations occupied one third of the island, and the build-up had interrupted the return of land to the original landowners. There were now 80 contaminated military dump sites on the island, and the civilian Ordot landfill contained 17 toxic chemicals.

13. The Committee must give the utmost priority to the right to self-determination of the people of Guam. It must enact the decolonization process, allocating the maximum available funding to a campaign informing Chamorus of their right to self-determination and the options for decolonization. The Committee must also examine the failure of the administering Power to comply with the Charter of the United Nations.

14. **Ms. Cristobal** (Guahan Coalition for Peace and Justice) said that the current militarization of Guam was unprecedented. Earlier United Nations resolutions had called on the administering Power to ensure that the presence of military bases and installations would not constitute an obstacle to decolonization. Yet the most recent report of the Special Committee (A/64/23) made only a cursory reference to deep concerns expressed by civil society and others. Such changes undermined the intent and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations. The working paper on Guam (A/AC.109/2009/16) stated that local residents generally welcomed the military build-up, and that opposition stemmed mainly from concerns about the sociocultural impact on Guam, but nothing could be further from the truth. She called on the Committee to establish a budgetary programme to provide for a visit by the Secretary-General, a special representative or a mission in accordance with the report of the Secretary-General on the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism (A/56/61).

15. The single most important study of the militarization plan was an environmental impact study, which had been prepared by military contractors, but the designated agencies were giving it only the minimum review, and there were no plans for a public review. The study did not address the political relationship between the administering Power and Guam, or the impact of a colonial history on the Chamoru people. Nor did it consider alternatives or engage with stakeholders; it was effectively intended to justify the plan. Although the final decision had not yet been taken, the construction of the nuclear submarine and ammunition wharf was already well under way and foreign workers had arrived. The militarization plan was a blatant violation of the right to self-determination, and must be comprehensively addressed by the Special Committee.

16. **Mr. Aguon** (I Nasion Chamoru) regretted that the petitioners' speaking time had been reduced at short notice. He said that the military build-up on Guam would bring some 50,000 military personnel and foreign workers to the island, not to mention six nuclear submarines and a monstrous Global Strike Force.

17. The core issue was the self-determination of the Chamoru people, who now accounted for only 37 per cent of the island's population. The principle of self-determination was accepted as a *jus cogens* norm from which no derogation was permitted. It was established in the Charter of the United Nations and in numerous conventions. Article 73 of the Charter stated that administering Powers should recognize the principle that the interests of the inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories were paramount. The major non-binding declarations adopted by the General Assembly had further defined the terms of the Charter. General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) stated that the subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constituted a denial of fundamental human rights. The principle of self-determination had also been asserted by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV). As a Member State of the United Nations and a signatory to those Conventions, the United States was committed to the principle of self-determination. The military build-up made a mockery of its mandate as administering

Power. The Chamoru people did not need more words; they needed a United Nations intervention.

18. **Mr. Roberts**, speaking in his personal capacity as a doctoral candidate in the Department of Geography, University of Toronto, said that his campaigning work on behalf of university students from underrepresented backgrounds had made him closely aware of the plight of the Chamoru people. The United States had itself championed voting rights for democratically elected representatives. The largely unacknowledged colonial status of Guam was therefore abhorrent.

19. Lessons could be learned from the struggles of other indigenous peoples. In Canada, legal challenges by indigenous groups had in recent years brought about Government policy changes intended to rectify the impact of historical and contemporary colonialism. Although such action had not yet resulted in significant material change, it was a basis for engagement.

20. The collective amnesia of the administering Power hindered the Chamoru struggle for self-determination and prevented the mobilization of broad public support in the United States. Without legal recognition, the needs of the indigenous people could not be addressed. By failing to recognize their right to self-determination, the United States had effectively undermined social movements seeking restitution for injustices. The Committee could play a central role in confronting that policy.

21. **Ms. Roberto**, speaking in her personal capacity as a representative of the University of California Berkeley Pacific Islander Alumni, said that she wished to testify about the physical and emotional effects of the displacement resulting from colonialism. Her great-grandfather, who had worked for the United States military, had wanted his family to leave the island and assimilate. However, her own generation questioned whether assimilation had indeed been a success story. From a material and emotional point of view, their situation was better than that of the remaining Chamorus on Guam. The Chamoru consciousness was endangered, and Chamoru people had been exposed to radiation and dangerous chemicals. Older persons, who bound families together, fought cancer and neuro-degenerative diseases. Their loss robbed the community of an invaluable cultural resource. The effects of colonialism had followed emigrant Chamorus; forced migration was not self-determination. Her family had gained access to better

education and resources, but lost its land, language and culture.

22. She called on the Committee to give the utmost priority to the inalienable right of the Chamoru people to self-determination. United Nations officials must visit the island within six months to assess the implications of the United States' presence and military build-up.

23. **Ms. Quinata** (South California Chapter of Famoksaiyan) said that she wished to honour the heroic and passionate people who had struggled for the rights and self-determination of the Chamorus. Those who questioned the effects of the United States military build-up had been ignored. The people whose environment would be destroyed by that build-up had been excluded from the decision to carry it out.

24. For the Chamoru people, the struggle was not only a political one; it was a matter of asserting their identity and intrinsic rights. She recounted a vision of her ancestors, whose example had paved the way for future Chamorus. That powerful calling had kept alive her passion for her people's heritage and struggle for self-determination. Guided by her ancestors and moved by their strength and courage, she wished to reaffirm that the question of Guam was one of decolonization and of the eradication of militarism and colonialism.

25. **Ms. Tedtaotao** (Riverside Chapter of Chamorro Nation) said that the Chamoru people continued to be denied their right to their land and self-determination, and the devastation of their island made their struggle all the more difficult. In view of the impending military build-up, which would begin in 2010, the international community should hold the administering Power accountable.

26. The resilient culture of the Chamoru people had prevailed against disarray, militarism and cultural hegemony. However, its voice had been ignored, and the military build-up was only a fraction of its tragic loss. For the Chamoru people, self-determination was not simply a word: it lived in their hearts, minds and souls.

Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/64/5/Add. 22, 23, 31, 32, 34, 35, 39, 41, 44, 47, 49, 62, 70, 80)

27. **Mr. Sadek**, speaking in his personal capacity as a former Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Algerian Parliament, said that in the early 1960s,

the United Nations considered Western Sahara as a territory under colonization, whose people had a right to self-determination and independence. In 1975, the International Court of Justice stated that Western Sahara had not been a Moroccan territory prior to the Spanish colonization, and that no sovereign ties existed between Western Sahara and the Kingdom of Morocco.

28. In the hitherto incomplete process of decolonization, the people of the Territory had been prevented by force of arms from exercising their inalienable right to self-determination; Spain had abdicated its international obligations in handing over the Territory to Morocco; and the fait accompli of the occupation of the Territory, imposed by military means, had led to the oppression of the Saharawi people, the denial of their rights, and the looting of their natural resources.

29. The United Nations bore a clear responsibility as long as the Saharawi people were denied the opportunity to express their will through a free, fair, democratic and transparent referendum organized and supervised by the United Nations in cooperation with the African Union. The 1991 United Nations settlement plan, signed by the Frente Polisario and Morocco and endorsed by the Security Council, the General Assembly, and the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), remained the sole reference for a just and lasting solution and a genuine framework to end the conflict.

30. There was no alternative to self-determination, and annulling the 1991 settlement plan and the Houston accords of 1997 would be a grave mistake with dangerous consequences for the whole region. Spain, which was still the legal administering Power of Western Sahara, should fulfil its legal and political responsibilities, just as its neighbour Portugal had done in East Timor. All Member States, particularly France, should take all necessary steps to ensure the implementation of the right of the people of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence.

31. **Mr. Boukhari** (Representative of the Frente Polisario) said that one could not help but wonder why the United Nations remained unable to put an end to the last case of colonialism in Africa after more than 40 years. Since the self-determination referendum in 1992, Morocco had been trying to involve the United Nations in the acceptance of a de facto situation that was completely contrary to international legality. Its

proposal of autonomy for Western Sahara, presented in April 2007 in the framework of what it unilaterally called "Moroccan sovereignty", was symptomatic of that attempt.

32. Negotiations between the two parties, called for by the Security Council and supported by the General Assembly, and which had begun in Manhasset in June 2007, had been undermined by Morocco's unwillingness to discuss or negotiate anything except its so-called "autonomy plan" — a plan that implied accepting beforehand that Western Sahara was already an integral part of the Kingdom of Morocco.

33. That precondition therefore violated the letter and spirit of the resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. Morocco continued to harbour the colonial illusion of annexing Western Sahara, ignoring not only the views of the international community, but also its own reiterated and unequivocal commitments to the independence of Western Sahara that it had recognized before the United Nations and which could be found in the archives of that institution and of the African Union.

34. Morocco was illegally exploiting the natural resources of the Territory, exploitation in which others, such as the European Union, were unfortunately involved. Its policies of systematic repression, involving torture, arbitrary detentions, politically motivated trials and police brutality against women and children, had raised the concern of humanitarian organizations. He expressed particular concern at the news that all political parties in Morocco had recently launched an offensive against supporters of human rights wishing to return to the Territory.

35. Furthermore, Morocco had managed deliberately to frustrate the prolonged efforts of the international community to hold a simple self-determination referendum, in the process involving the international community in abandoning the defence of the human rights of a small and innocent people. The continuing conflict over decolonization caused unjust suffering for the people of the Territory, and symbolized the collective failure of the international community to resolve the issue. It was time to take stock of the situation; the right of the Territory to become a sovereign, independent and responsible nation should not be postponed any longer.

36. **Mr. de Guillenchmidt**, speaking in his personal capacity as the former Dean of the Faculty of Law at

the University of Paris Descartes, said that the unacceptable slander against Morocco with regard to human rights must be stopped, as the denunciations involved were based on erroneous information. It was important to stress the scope of efforts by Morocco to achieve respect for freedoms in Western Sahara as in all countries. The exemplary juridical framework it had established, on the basis of its Constitution, was what should be used objectively to evaluate the extent of true democracy in southern Morocco. As examples, he cited high participation in the elections, the active exercise of trade unionism, freedom of association, and a systematic opening of the regions of the south which the Frente Polisario had characterized as "closed to foreigners".

37. The state of autonomy proposed by Morocco was modern, validated by referendum, and did not challenge the territorial integrity of Morocco. That proposal, which the Frente Polisario refused to discuss, provided for a parliament composed of representatives of the tribes, elected by direct universal suffrage and disposing of its own financial resources. He called on the parties to avoid getting bogged down; otherwise peaceful cooperation among the peoples of the Maghreb would not be moved forward.

38. **Mr. Leite** (International Platform of Jurists for East Timor) said that he was also speaking on behalf of the Stichting Zelfbeschikking West-Sahara, an association established under Dutch law for the defence of the right to self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.

39. He noted that the pro-Moroccan petitioners addressing the Committee avoided the issue of Morocco's occupation and any mention of the referendum. Instead, they branded the Frente Polisario as a separatist group driven by Marxist or Islamist ideology, and tried to discredit it through accusations of slavery, terrorism, and fundamentalism, while portraying Morocco as a democratic regime. They characterized the conflict as one between Algeria and Morocco, rather than between Morocco and the Frente Polisario, and insisted on Algeria's links to terrorists, communists and fundamentalists. They also emphasized the "Eastern-bloc" nature of the countries that had historically supported the idea of independence, hoping thereby to discredit the idea of a referendum on independence. They trumpeted the views of the few who supported the Moroccan position, but dismissed those of international bodies that

appeared to support the holding of a referendum or the idea of independence.

40. The fact remained, however, that part of the Territory of Western Sahara was illegally occupied by Morocco, and part was under the total control of the Frente Polisario. The Saharawi Republic, a member of the African Union, was recognized by more than 80 States, and its right to self-determination was supported in more than 100 United Nations resolutions. Morocco refused to hold a referendum and had proposed an autonomy plan without the option of independence, contrary to international law. In its December 2008 report, Human Rights Watch had again denounced Moroccan violations in the occupied Territory, disproved the accusation that Saharawi refugees in Tindouf were hostages of the Frente Polisario, and recommended that the mandate of MINURSO should be expanded to include human rights monitoring.

41. **Mr. Ould Souilem**, speaking in his personal capacity as a founding member of the Frente Polisario, said that he had recently returned to his country after having realized the failure of the Polisario project and its manipulation by Algeria. Morocco had installed a modern democratic system, under which the Saharawi people enjoyed their own rights. The Moroccan proposal made possible a dignified life for the Saharawis and their children.

42. Algerian control of all the refugee camps presented a barrier to the aspirations of the Saharawi people to return to their country, and he appealed for an end to the calvary of his compatriots in the Tindouf camps. He said those who had been able to return were fortunate, after having survived the genocide to which they had been subjected.

43. **Mr. Pereira Galeano** (Vice-President, Senate of Paraguay) said that despite all of the efforts of the United Nations, the conflict in Western Sahara had continued for more than 30 years without a solution, and the Saharawi people continued to suffer the consequences. It was the obligation of the parties involved in the conflict to guarantee respect for the human rights of the people of Western Sahara, in the territory and in the refugee camps.

44. MINURSO played an indispensable role in maintaining the ceasefire. It was important that the parties to the conflict continued to cooperate with MINURSO, and he appealed to the parties to support

the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, Christopher Ross, to reach a mutually acceptable and lasting solution that would lead to self-determination in Western Sahara. The Manhasset negotiations had yet to yield any positive results, but he expressed hope that the forthcoming meetings would make possible, under the auspices of the Secretary-General and in conformity with international law, negotiations that would facilitate the implementation of several resolutions passed on the issue, in order to bring about the final resolution of the question of Western Sahara.

45. **Ms. Cervone** (Centrist Democratic Women International) said that there was no longer any reason for the conflict in the Maghreb region to continue. The populations kept by force in the Tindouf camps were victims of Algerian policy. It was no secret that the camps were a major prison, surrounded by the Algerian army. The Frente Polisario and the intelligence services had been working for decades to deceive public opinion about conditions in the camps, but the world was now beginning to understand the truth thanks to the brave testimonies of those who had managed to escape.

46. Women and children suffered the worst in the camps; in addition to severe malnutrition, children were subject to being torn from their families at early ages and sent to other countries for years of implacable indoctrination and military training. Groups such as Human Rights Watch had expressed concern that the Tindouf camps were outside the control of the United Nations and other organizations, and that the Frente Polisario monopolized the political discourse and opposed any opposition to its own leadership. However, through the work of the Fourth Committee, more people were now aware of what was happening in the Tindouf camps, so that no one could later claim ignorance. It was time for the United Nations to carry out its responsibilities to protect the civilian population being kept by force in the Tindouf camps.

47. **Mr. Jensen**, speaking in his personal capacity as former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, said that potential dangers arose when people were deprived of decent living conditions and prospects for a better life. Morocco would prefer a straightforward integration of the territory of Western Sahara into the Kingdom, while the Frente Polisario offered independence. Perhaps the answer lay between those two extremes. The Moroccan proposal could at

least provide a springboard for talks, and perhaps the two sides could eventually compromise.

48. The conflict between the two sides impeded development for a burgeoning population. Unemployment affected 15 per cent of the labour force, and nearly a third of the population were under 15 years of age. A concerted effort was necessary to achieve economic and social development, in the interest of everyone throughout the region. In addition, the Maghreb States needed to show political will, and offer encouragement for a resolution of the conflict.

49. **Mr. Fernández Martín** (European People's Party and European Democrats Group in the European Parliament) said that he had been following the conflict of Western Sahara for the past 40 years. In that conflict, the first victim on both sides was human rights. The Frente Polisario was calling for a referendum, and its position had not changed over the years. For its part, Morocco would never accede to giving independence to the provinces of the south. The United Nations had not been able to bring about an agreement.

50. A military solution was not possible; a lasting solution could only be achieved through negotiations and dialogue. Possibilities for autonomy in Western Sahara should be explored. It had not been easy for Spain during its dictatorship to become a decentralized State, but it had succeeded in achieving a positive balance after more than 40 years. Spain's experience could serve as a positive example for the Maghreb States, so that they could become united as well.

51. **Ms. Warburg** (Freedom for All) said that for the past 33 years, the world's second-oldest group of refugees had been forcibly detained in the Algerian-backed, Frente Polisario-run camps in Tindouf, where fundamental human rights were routinely ignored and abused, and freedom of thought and expression were non-existent. Husbands and wives, children and siblings were placed in widely separated camps, violating the right to family life outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and contravening the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees.

52. Algeria had also ignored the Notice of Protection issued by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2002, which called on States to respect the principle of freely approved return of refugees to their homes. Children

were being sent thousands of miles from the Sahara with no parental contact, and forced to work as domestics and labourers in fields and factories. The 90,000 Tindouf detainees relied exclusively on humanitarian aid supplied by international donors. Former Polisario leaders had attested to the near-famine conditions in the camps, where illnesses such as anaemia were rampant. She called on Algeria to allow the United Nations refugee agency to conduct a census of the camp's population, to identify and register those in Tindouf. Her organization supported the view of Human Rights Watch, holding the Government of Algeria as well as the Frente Polisario accountable for any violations committed in Algeria by the Frente Polisario, and endorsed Amnesty International's recent call for those responsible for human rights abuses in the camps to be brought to justice. Morocco's autonomy initiative offered a pragmatic and permanent solution to the conflict.

53. **Mr. de Cara**, speaking in his personal capacity as a professor of international law at the University of Paris Descartes and as Director of the University of Paris Sorbonne in Abu Dhabi, said that the right of people to self-determination was an essential principle of international law that Morocco had long endorsed. In its proposal of autonomy for the provinces of the south, considered as being responsible and credible by the Security Council, Morocco had provided a text that guaranteed rights and freedoms to the inhabitants within the framework of Moroccan law.

54. It was important to stress that the abuse and questioning of Morocco represented a threat to its integrity. For example, Morocco should not be criticized for public order measures intended to put an end to criminal activities. Those criticisms represented unlawful interference and revealed the bad faith of people making them; such measures were commonly used by States to ensure public order, national unity, and respect for individual rights and liberties as well as for the territorial integrity of those States.

55. **Ms. Bachir-Abderahman** (UJSARIO: Saharawi Youth Union) said that in her three years of addressing the Committee on the question of Western Sahara, little if anything had been done regarding Africa's last colony. After the invasion of 1975, the Moroccan authority had violated international law and the Geneva Convention, importing thousands of Moroccans into Western Saharan territories, displacing thousands of Saharawis. The Moroccan Government continued to

violate human rights, exploit Saharawi natural resources, and spread deliberate lies through the media.

56. Since May 2005, many youths still living in the occupied territories had begun to engage in a non-violent struggle for their right to self-determination. However, as had been noted by international groups like Human Rights Watch, dozens of Saharawis continued to be brutally attacked, arrested and even killed by the Moroccan forces and armed police. Those attacks included severe beatings and sexual abuse. Many Saharawi prisoners were being tortured in Moroccan prisons and disappearing, and many more Saharawis were suffering varying degrees of discrimination. The Moroccan Government appeared to be ignoring the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and she urged the United Nations to take immediate action to prevent ongoing human rights violations in the occupied territories of Western Sahara.

57. **Mr. Dedenis** (Blain Accueil Enfants Sahraouis) said that while the Moroccan people were nearly unanimous in holding that Western Sahara was part of Morocco, that view was based on the distortion of facts engaged in by the Moroccan Government in the name of protecting its territorial integrity. Because they were being prevented from meaningful participation in the debate on Western Sahara, the Moroccan people were being deprived of their rights to freedom of will and opinion. That in turn created an obstacle to the resolution of the conflict, because if the Moroccan people were able to form their own views of the situation, their unanimity would very likely dissipate.

58. While the Moroccan people were being deprived of the exercise of their right to information and freedom of opinion, the people of Western Sahara were being denied their right to self-determination. They, in turn, were unanimous in their desire to exercise that right within the framework of a referendum. Peace had value only if it were lasting or final, and the durability of the peace should not be sacrificed in the search for a quick solution. A lasting solution could only be reached through negotiations between the Frente Polisario and Morocco, with the participation of both the Moroccan and Saharawi peoples. There could be no real solution without respect for fundamental rights.

59. **Mr. Assor** (Surrey Three Faiths Forum) said that he had again come to speak on behalf of the downtrodden people in the Tindouf camps. He urged the Committee to stop aid from being diverted from the

detainees to markets in Algiers, Nouakchott and elsewhere. He had hoped that his repeated pleas and personal appeals, including to the head of UNHCR, would have awakened the Committee and the wider international community to the dire situation in the camps.

60. He wished to acknowledge remarks by the top UNHCR official in the region that no further aid would be forthcoming until a census was held. His organization had consistently advocated such a census, viewing it as indispensable. He urged the Committee to help UNHCR in preventing the diversion of aid from the camps, and further, not to allow another four years to pass before his organization was allowed to visit the camps in order to assess peoples' needs and to bring assistance. He also asked that detainees be allowed to "vote with their feet".

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.

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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee)****Summary record of the 5th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 8 October 2009, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)
later: Ms. Schroderus-Fox (Vice-Chairperson) (Finland)
later: Mr. Al-Nasser (Chairperson) (Qatar)

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Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under
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Hearing of petitioners (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)

Hearing of petitioners (continued)

Question of Western Sahara (A/C.4/64/5/Add.11, Add.24, Add.25, Add.26, Add.27, Add.28, Add.29, Add.30, Add.37, Add.38, Add.40, Add.42, Add.43, Add.45, Add.46, Add.48, Add.52, Add.53, Add.54, Add.55, Add.56, Add.57, Add.59, Add.63, Add.64, Add.65, Add.66, Add.77, Add.78, Add.81, Add.83)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Ayachi (Comité National Algérien de Solidarité avec le Peuple Sahraoui) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

2. **Mr. Ayachi** (Comité National Algérien de Solidarité avec le Peuple Sahraoui) said that, for more than three decades, the human rights of the Saharawi people had been grossly violated, generating an atmosphere of terror that had dissuaded many victims and witnesses from reporting the atrocities. Many of the violations had not been properly documented or investigated due to that atmosphere and to the media embargo and difficulties of access for non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the international media and observers. Hundreds of Saharawi people had been arrested and, following unfair trials, imprisoned in detention centres where brutal methods of torture were practiced with impunity. The Moroccan occupying administration was perpetrating odious crimes against humanity, including kidnapping, arbitrary detention, torture, extrajudicial executions and enforced internal displacement and exile; men, women and children from all walks of life were victims.

3. The international aid provided to the 165,000 Saharawi refugees in the Tindouf camps was insufficient, representing less than 50 cents a day for each person. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had recently visited the Saharawi refugee camps and expressed deep concern about the lack of food, health care, and basic infrastructure and services. The Committee should call for the granting of access to the camps for international observation missions and for the expansion of the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara

(MINURSO) to include the monitoring of human rights in Western Sahara.

4. *Mr. Ayachi withdrew.*

5. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Hamoudi (Deputy Mayor of Tours, France) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

6. **Ms. Hamoudi** (Deputy Mayor of Tours, France) said that in February 2009 she had been a member of a French delegation of 140 elected officials that had carried out a fact-finding mission on the humanitarian situation in the Tindouf refugee camps. The delegation had been able to speak freely to the refugees, gather information and assess the humanitarian needs. On her return to France, she had testified about her experience and received some criticism from advocates of a Moroccan Sahara but also encouragement from people of Moroccan origin who supported the Saharawi people's right to self-determination. As a result of an appeal launched by the delegation, several tons of materials and food had been sent to the camps in August 2009. It was clear, however, that the difficulties of the Saharawi people could only be resolved within the context of the United Nations. The MINURSO mandate must be expanded to allow it to monitor respect for human rights.

7. *Ms. Hamoudi withdrew.*

8. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Elghouayel (Together Foundation) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

9. **Mr. Elghouayel** (Together Foundation) said that, in June 2007, two Australian journalists and film-makers had advised the Foundation that a situation of systematic and institutionalized slavery had been practised for decades by white Saharawis over their black fellow refugees in the Frente POLISARIO camps. The journalists had made a documentary which was being shown at international film festivals. The members of the Foundation had remained sceptical and had organized meetings between the journalists and other NGOs, including Human Rights Watch; the journalists had also been invited to a meeting with the United Nations Correspondents Association. The Foundation had arranged with the Frente POLISARIO leadership to send a mission of independent international journalists to visit the camps; but the communication lines had been interrupted without explanation and the mission had been aborted.

Nevertheless, the Foundation had been able to meet representatives of the camp dwellers during two visits to Mauritania. One of the interviews had been recorded and had appeared on YouTube.

10. *Mr. Elghouayel withdrew.*

11. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Bahaijoub (Family Protection) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

12. **Ms. Bahaijoub** (Family Protection) said that the Algerian authorities had consistently ignored the international community's call to address the issue of those who had disappeared from the Tindouf camps and to identify the bodies buried in 49 graves located near the main prison, near the Frente POLISARIO headquarters at Rabouni. Independent reports by returnees to Morocco referred to gross human rights violations perpetrated by the Frente POLISARIO leadership against the people in the Tindouf camps, with women, children and the elderly being targeted specifically. However, the abuses were not being addressed due to the lack of access to the camps and because all matters related to the camps passed through the Algerian authorities. While the Security Council searched for a lasting political solution, preferably based on the proposal for autonomy as the only viable solution for the disputed Territory, the people in the Tindouf camps should be allowed to return to Morocco and Algeria should improve living conditions in the camps instead of ignoring the inhumane conditions that prevailed.

13. *Ms. Bahaijoub withdrew.*

14. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Hemeida took a place at the petitioners' table.*

15. **Ms. Hemeida**, speaking in her personal capacity as a Saharawi student in the United States of America, said that the illegal Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara had taken the Saharawi people's land, threatened their identity and violated their human rights. Half the Saharawi lived in the occupied Territory, while the other half, including her family, lived in one of the largest refugee camps in the world and were dependent on humanitarian aid. Half the refugees were children, who were considered to be the generation that would bring about change for Western Sahara, but the occupation had crushed their hopes for the future. She had benefited from the generosity of an American host family and had the opportunity to

pursue higher education. Her dream was that every Saharawi child could have the same chance in life. All Saharawi people aspired to the right to self-determination through a free and fair referendum.

16. *Ms. Hemeida withdrew.*

17. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Táboas Veleiro took a place at the petitioners' table.*

18. **Ms. Táboas Veleiro**, speaking in her personal capacity as a member of the Galician Nationalist Party in the Galician Parliament, said that the international community must recognize the sovereignty of the Saharawi people, long-time inhabitants of the region that had shaped their national identity. So many initiatives had failed that the Saharawi people in the refugee camps in Algeria had begun to lose hope of recovering their Territory and having their right to self-determination recognized. The United Nations must support a self-determination process that included the option of independence and the monitoring of respect for human rights. Self-determination was the only way to ensure the Saharawi nation's survival and full control over its Territory with the ultimate goal of founding a State. The Organization must set in motion a transparent referendum with full guarantees.

19. *Ms. Táboas Veleiro withdrew.*

20. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Boussif (President, Council of the region of Rio de Oro) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

21. **Mr. Boussif** (President, Council of the region of Rio de Oro) said that there were two main reasons why all the measures taken by the international community with regard to Western Sahara had failed. First, the obstinacy of Algeria, which wanted the negotiations to fail, because it sought a corridor to the Atlantic and wanted to cut Morocco off from Western Sahara. Second, the control of the Frente POLISARIO by the Algerian security authorities, which dictated its decisions. Morocco had proposed broad autonomy for the Saharawi people to enable them to govern themselves, giving Algeria the opportunity to disengage from the complex situation with honour. Although Morocco's proposal had been accepted by many in the international community, the situation remained unchanged, owing to the obstinacy of Algeria. The Frente POLISARIO leaders must rise to their responsibilities and declare their independence from the mandates of Algeria in order to negotiate in

complete freedom. The Tindouf camp should be taken away from Algeria. Any solution to the conflict had to involve Algeria, as the principal actor, which should have the courage to end the conflict.

22. *Mr. Boussif withdrew.*

23. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Corbyn (Chair, Western Sahara Group, United Kingdom Parliament) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

24. **Mr. Corbyn** (Chair, Western Sahara Group, United Kingdom Parliament) said that the United Nations had a crucial role to play in ensuring a peaceful and just future for the people of the Western Sahara. It had endeavoured to maintain the ceasefire and ensure the survival of the people in the camps ever since Morocco occupied the Territory, forcing the majority of the Saharawi people into refugee camps in Algeria. In law, the Saharawi people had the right of return and must be allowed to decide their own future. Their poverty and hardship was in stark contrast to the considerable riches of Western Sahara that were being exploited by settlers and international companies. The European Union had concluded trade agreements and provided support to Morocco, despite protests regarding human rights abuses and the sale of Western Sahara's natural resources.

25. Action should be taken immediately, particularly to allow prison visits and the release of prisoners. The United Nations must acknowledge the illegal nature of the continued occupation and take political action to correct it and to ensure that the 165,000 people living in forced exile received the right to self-determination. A settlement that brought justice for the Saharawi people would be of immense benefit to all the peoples of the region and ensure good relations between all the nations of the Maghreb.

26. *Mr. Corbyn withdrew.*

27. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Sahli-Fadel took a place at the petitioners' table.*

28. **Ms. Sahli-Fadel**, speaking in her personal capacity as a professor of international law, said that since Western Sahara was an occupied Territory, Morocco, as the occupying Power, must fulfil its international obligations by protecting the rights of the Saharawi people and maintaining the territorial status quo. The International Court of Justice had confirmed the right to self-determination of the Saharawi people and rejected Moroccan sovereignty over the Territory.

Morocco was engaged in political repression against the Saharawi people in the occupied Territory and was exploiting their natural resources, in violation of international law. While the question of Western Sahara continued to be manipulated by States which showed little concern for international law, the United Nations must give precedence to the imperative need of self-determination for the Saharawi people.

29. *Ms. Sahli-Fadel withdrew.*

30. *Ms. Schroderus-Fox (Finland), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

31. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Lewis (Western Sahara Resource Watch) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

32. **Ms. Lewis** (Western Sahara Resource Watch), speaking also on behalf of the Australia Western Sahara Association, said that the allegations of the Together Foundation, based on the report of two Australian journalists, were unfounded and the documentary contained many errors. The main character had attended the opening night of the film to deny that she was a slave and express her anger at being portrayed as such.

33. The aim of her organization was to research what was happening to the resources in the part of Western Sahara under Moroccan control and to protect them from exploitation by anyone other than the Saharawi people. The United Nations should be protecting those resources, instead of standing by while they were sold for Morocco's benefit. Phosphate mined in the Territory was being sold by a Moroccan state company without any improvement in the living conditions of the Saharawi people. A similar story could be told in the case of fish, sand, water, oil and other minerals, as well as tourism. The Australia Western Sahara Association was particularly concerned because three Australian fertilizer companies were importing phosphates from Western Sahara, even though Swedish and Norwegian entities had blacklisted two of them.

34. The Committee should reaffirm the permanent sovereignty of peoples over their natural resources and should send an observation mission to the Territory to report on the situation. MINURSO should be empowered to protect the natural resources of the Territory from exploitation by the occupying Power, Morocco.

35. *Ms. Lewis withdrew.*

36. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Blanc took a place at the petitioners' table.*

37. **Mr. Blanc**, speaking in his personal capacity as a professor emeritus, University of Perpignan Via Domitia, said that Morocco's initiative for negotiating a status of autonomy for the region of the Sahara within the framework of the sovereignty of the Kingdom, its territorial integrity and its national unity represented a solemn commitment to make a positive contribution to the efforts of the United Nations to find a political resolution to the conflict. That type of status has been tested in the United Kingdom, Italy and Spain, and was a solution that was appropriate for strengthening the democracy of strongly centralized systems. Genuine regional autonomy, within the framework of the indivisibility of the State, would ensure to the Saharawi people, acting through their legislative, executive and judiciary bodies within the territorial limits of the region, all the powers of a State except for the attributes of the central State.

38. *Mr. Blanc withdrew.*

39. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Bouaida took a place at the petitioners' table.*

40. **Ms. Bouaida**, speaking in her personal capacity as a member of the Moroccan Parliament, said that while a very critical situation existed in the Tindouf camps, and was being blatantly manipulated by Algeria, Morocco had made considerable progress, especially in the socio-economic development of the southern provinces.

41. Young Saharawis, such as herself, agreed with the autonomy proposal, because it would consolidate previous achievements and make the region an essential actor in the North African region. A negotiated autonomy would strengthen the Sahara region at all levels, ensure adequate living conditions for all Saharawis and allow the Saharawi people to concentrate on developing their culture, economy and society, while managing their local affairs. One consequence of the conflict had been the growth of smuggling in the region, including drug trafficking. A normalization of the political situation in the region was urgently needed.

42. *Ms. Bouaida withdrew.*

43. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Lebaihi took a place at the petitioners' table.*

44. **Mr. Lebaihi**, speaking in his personal capacity as a Saharawi student in the United States of America, said that he had lived most of his life in a refugee camp in the Sahara desert in south-western Algeria, where survival depended on humanitarian aid which was decreasing each year. The Saharawi people could wait no longer; they must be allowed to exercise their right to self-determination through a free and fair referendum. The Committee should use its influence to help the Saharawi people exercise that right, whatever the outcome.

45. *Mr. Lebaihi withdrew.*

46. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. López Villicaña took a place at the petitioners' table.*

47. **Mr. López Villicaña**, speaking in his personal capacity as a faculty member of the University of the Americas, Puebla, Mexico, said that through its initiative for broad autonomy for the region of the Sahara, Morocco was willing to allow the Saharawi people, including those in the Tindouf camps, to exercise their right to self-determination. The proposal was in line with the principle embodied in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) that any attempt aimed at the partial or total disruption of the national unity and the territorial integrity of a country was incompatible with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and, furthermore, with General Assembly resolution 2625 (XXV), which stated that all people had the right freely to determine their political status, without external influence. Morocco's proposal had been described by the Security Council as part of serious and credible efforts to move the process forward to resolution. The international community should help the Saharawi people confined in Tindouf to return in peace and harmony to their homes in the provinces of southern Morocco.

48. *Mr. López Villicaña withdrew.*

49. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Dobovšek took a place at the petitioners' table.*

50. **Mr. Dobovšek**, speaking in his personal capacity as a professor of law, said that the Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on Western Sahara of 16 October 1975, though not binding upon States, was binding upon the General Assembly as an organ of the United Nations. That Advisory Opinion referred to the legal ties between Morocco and the people of Western Sahara; the decolonization process must take into

account all the principles involved in respect both of the Saharawi people and of Morocco. Extreme positions involving independence or annexation had already been found unworkable and were holding up the process.

51. The autonomy proposal made by Morocco was founded in international law, General Assembly resolutions on self-determination and territorial integrity and the Advisory Opinion. It would protect the identity of the Saharawi people and allow them to administer their own affairs. He urged the Committee to promote progress in the negotiations towards a solution for Western Sahara based on that proposal.

52. *Mr. Dobovšek withdrew.*

53. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Loungou took a place at the petitioners' table.*

54. **Mr. Loungou**, speaking in his personal capacity as a university professor, Omar Bongo University, Gabon, said that the Sahel-Saharan region was ravaged by political and criminal gangs and terrorist groups. The profits generated by trafficking in weapons, drugs, and illegal migrants enabled terrorist groups to expand their operations and recruit new members among the local population. The proximity to large military facilities of the refugee camps in Algeria introduced a dangerous element in the region, and could give refugees access to large stocks of weapons; given the frustration of the occupants of the camps, who saw no chance of a settlement to the question of Western Sahara because of the intransigence of the Frente POLISARIO and the Algerian position regarding the Moroccan proposal of autonomy, they might see no alternative to joining the terrorists.

55. *Mr. Loungou withdrew.*

56. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Nakagawa took a place at the petitioners' table.*

57. **Ms. Nakagawa**, speaking in her personal capacity, said that Morocco was conducting many development projects in the Sahara region. In its pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals, it was applying the same strategies throughout its territory. If the autonomy proposed by Morocco became a reality, representatives from all walks of Western Saharan life would be actively engaged in the region's human, social and economic development.

58. In contrast to the situation of the Saharawi community in the southern provinces of Morocco, the situation in the Tindouf camps was characterized by rigid military control and violations of human rights. The United Nations must safeguard the interests of the people of Western Sahara. The autonomy proposal would allow the parties concerned to reach a compromise and to conduct substantive negotiations.

59. *Ms. Nakagawa withdrew.*

60. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Carrillo Giralt (Deputy, Parliament of Catalonia, Coordinator of the Intergroup "Peace and Freedom in the Sahara") took a place at the petitioners' table.*

61. **Mr. Carrillo Giralt** (Deputy, Parliament of Catalonia, Coordinator of the Intergroup "Peace and Freedom in the Sahara") said that in November 2007, the Parliament of Catalonia had adopted a Declaration expressing solidarity with the Saharawi people, whose human rights were being violated by Morocco. The United Nations must push for a political solution for Western Sahara, with the participation of both Morocco and Spain. The wall built by Morocco must be destroyed and the millions of landmines it had deployed must be removed. All missing persons and prisoners of war must be accounted for and the illegal economic exploitation of Western Sahara must be stopped.

62. *Mr. Carrillo Giralt withdrew.*

63. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Addicks took a place at the petitioners' table.*

64. **Mr. Addicks**, speaking in his personal capacity as a member of the German Parliament, said that he believed that autonomy was the best solution. Should all the people living in the Tindouf camp return to their homeland, they would be able to enjoy human rights, political liberty and autonomy. The Frente POLISARIO wanted all or nothing, regardless of the situation of the refugees. It must compromise and leave behind its cold war mentality. For the refugees, it would be better to accept the Moroccan proposal of autonomy and self-administration and achieve one day, in peace and liberty, full autonomy and self-determination.

65. *Mr. Addicks withdrew.*

66. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Boussola took a place at the petitioners' table.*

67. **Ms. Boussola**, speaking in her personal capacity as member of the Moroccan Parliament, said that most people in the Sahara lived peaceful, secure lives and contributed to their own development through democratic institutions and civil associations. The turnout had been high in local elections which international observers had described as free and democratic. Women were involved in politics, society and all sectors of productive activity and Morocco was combating discrimination against them.

68. The autonomy for Western Sahara proposed by Morocco would break the deadlock. The parties concerned must leave behind entrenched positions and reach a compromise to protect the interests of the Saharawi people.

69. *Ms. Boussola withdrew.*

70. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Ducarme took a place at the petitioners' table.*

71. **Mr. Ducarme**, speaking in his personal capacity as a member of the Belgian Parliament, stressed the importance of a long-term view which, through compromise, would solve the long-standing problem of Western Sahara. Old ideologies must be set aside so that efforts could be focused on peace and development in the context of such initiatives as the Euro-Mediterranean Union. He expressed support for the Moroccan proposal for autonomy.

72. The rights of the children of Western Sahara were being violated by the Frente POLISARIO in the name of education. Young Saharawis from the Tindouf camps were being sent to schools in other countries and had no contact with their families for many years. The host countries must put a moratorium on education abroad for those children.

73. *Mr. Ducarme withdrew.*

74. *Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) resumed the Chair.*

75. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Al-Jabari took a place at the petitioners' table.*

76. **Mr. Al-Jabari**, speaking in his personal capacity as a dean, Hebron University, said that although Morocco's plan for the autonomy of Western Sahara was ambitious, it was considered realistic by many countries.

77. He called for international verification of accounts of human rights abuses in the Tindouf refugee

camps and urged an end to such violations. The refugees should return to their homeland, which Morocco would develop to every degree possible under the autonomy plan.

78. *Mr. Al-Jabari withdrew.*

79. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Nchama (Spokesperson for the Parliamentary Group of the Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

80. **Mr. Nchama** (Spokesperson for the Parliamentary Group of the Democratic Party of Equatorial Guinea) expressed strong support for the autonomy proposal, which would distribute power while safeguarding the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, as well as the principle of the peaceful settlement of disputes, while avoiding the adverse effects of secession. The population would be assured democratic management of their affairs and the opportunity to participate in the economic, social and cultural life of Morocco.

81. *Mr. Nchama withdrew.*

82. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Mekyna (Institut Austria Morocco) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

83. **Mr. Mekyna** (Institut Austria Morocco) said that the Saharawi and the Moroccans, like most of the population of the Maghreb, were historically related; if an artificial state was created, further destabilization would ensue. The socio-economic progress achieved by Morocco in Western Sahara was proof of the validity of the autonomy proposal. The time had come for forgiveness, not blame based on the history of colonialism. Algeria must open its borders towards Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO must allow the Saharawi in the camps to go back to their homeland.

84. *Mr. Mekyna withdrew.*

85. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Mghizlat (Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

86. **Mr. Mghizlat** (Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs) said that the conflict in the Sahara had been created by Algeria, in the context of the cold war, to undermine Morocco's territorial integrity and hinder its development. The efforts by Morocco to find a solution had led to the creation by King Mohammed VI

of the Royal Advisory Council for Saharan Affairs. The people of Western Sahara supported the autonomy proposal, which was the only viable solution which would guarantee the rights of the Territory's inhabitants and ensure stability and sustainable development in the Maghreb and Mediterranean region.

87. *Mr. Mghizlat withdrew.*

88. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Olarte (Former President, Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

89. **Mr. Olarte** (Former President, Autonomous Community of the Canary Islands) said that every effort must be made to avoid a violent solution, which would benefit no one. Algeria, through its hostility towards Morocco, had kept the dispute going. Its support for the Frente POLISARIO only served the objective of putting in place a puppet State that would provide it with an Atlantic coast, a strategic advantage and mineral wealth. The United Nations must put pressure on Algeria to reach a solution.

90. Morocco's proposal for that full autonomy would guarantee the people of Western Sahara a better and more decent life, while respecting their cultural and national identity and safeguarding their political, economic and cultural rights.

91. *Mr. Olarte withdrew.*

92. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Salazar Varela (Mayor of Tena, Ecuador) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

93. **Mr. Salazar Varela** (Mayor of Tena, Ecuador) expressed his wish for peace and harmony in Western Sahara. His city was twinned with Laayoune and his Saharan brothers and sisters there and in Algeria would be happier without the borders that divided them.

94. *Mr. Salazar Varela withdrew.*

95. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Abderrahmane (Chamber of Artisans, Dakhla) took a place at the petitioners' table.*

96. **Mr. Abderrahmane** (Chamber of Artisans, Dakhla) said that the conflict in the Sahara threatened the peace and security of the entire region of the Sahel, which had become a haven for all kind of terrorists and traffickers. Algeria, despite the vast sums it spent on sophisticated weapons, had not been able to secure its

borders against infiltration and stop the violence being waged by a handful of extremists. The violence could only be resolved with the effective contribution and participation of all countries in the region, through the elimination of the real causes and the establishment of an atmosphere of transparency and trust. Algeria must not harbour arm, finance and support Frente POLISARIO militias in their attacks on the territorial integrity of a neighbouring State. Morocco and Algeria must negotiate a political solution to the question of Sahara.

97. *Mr. Abderrahmane withdrew.*

98. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Acevedo Quevedo took a place at the petitioners' table.*

99. **Mr. Acevedo Quevedo**, speaking in his personal capacity as a senator, Paraguay, called on the parties concerned to continue their negotiations to broaden the programme of family visits; such visits would also help create an atmosphere of mutual trust. The human dimension of the conflict must be borne in mind; the parties must ensure respect for the human rights of the people of Western Sahara in the Territory and in the refugee camps.

100. *Mr. Acevedo Quevedo withdrew.*

101. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Oribe took a place at the petitioners' table.*

102. **Mr. Oribe**, speaking in his personal capacity as member of the Provincial Council of Álava, Spain, said that the exercise of fundamental human rights required, first and foremost, respect for the right to self-determination. At the same time, the perpetrators of human rights abuses against the Saharawi people must be brought to justice. He denounced attacks by Moroccan police forces on peaceful demonstrators who had called for the Moroccan forces of occupation to leave the Territory and deplored the ambiguous position taken by the Government of Spain which, as the former administering Power, should contribute to a just and final solution of the conflict in Western Sahara and refrain from protecting a regime which was violating fundamental rights.

103. *Mr. Oribe withdrew.*

104. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Perin took a place at the petitioners' table.*

105. **Mr. Perin**, speaking in his personal capacity as a member of the Italian Senate, said that he had visited

the Tindouf camps in 1993 and knew that the living conditions had greatly deteriorated since then. Many Saharawis had settled in the States around the Sahara desert. Morocco acknowledged the autonomy of the people, housed them and gave them work; it had a long history of peaceful international relations and respect for peoples and cultures.

106. *Mr. Perin withdrew.*

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.



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Summary record of the 6th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 9 October 2009, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)
later: Mr. Petrus (Vice-Chairman) (Lithuania)
later: Mr. Al-Nasser (Chairman) (Qatar)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 35: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (*continued*) (A/64/23 and Corr.2, chaps. VII and XII, and A/64/57)

Agenda item 36: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/64/23 and Corr.2, chaps. V and XII)

Agenda item 37: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (*continued*) (A/64/23 and Corr.2, chaps. VI and XII, and A/64/62)

Agenda item 38: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*) (A/64/69 and Corr.1 and 2)

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other items*) (*continued*) (A/64/23 and Corr.1 (Spanish only) and Corr.2, chaps. VIII, IX, X, XI and Corr.1 and XII, A/64/70 and A/64/185)

1. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that it was disheartening that 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories still remained, Western Sahara being the last colony on the African continent. Since the General Assembly had consistently recognized the inalienable right of the Saharawi people to self-determination and independence, the continued foreign occupation challenged the authority of the United Nations even as it threatened peace, security and stability on the African continent.

2. SADC was concerned that the Secretary-General had reported that the positions of the two parties to the conflict — the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro (Frente POLISARIO) — had remained virtually the same since the fourth round of negotiations, held in March 2008; the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy for Western Sahara were to be commended for their efforts to move the process into an intensive, substantive fifth round of

negotiations. SADC would support all efforts aimed at a speedy resolution to the question.

3. While it was encouraging that ceasefire violations had declined, there had been alarming reports of Moroccan threats against human rights defenders visiting the occupied Territory of Western Sahara and of frequent human rights violations against the Saharawis. The Secretary-General should immediately launch an investigation and submit a report to the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council.

4. **Mr. Onanga Ndiaye** (Gabon) said that his Government had always attached great importance to multilateralism and the centrality of the United Nations in world affairs. The Organization must continue its efforts to eradicate colonialism through better implementation of the relevant resolutions and the encouragement of new approaches that would meet the goals and specific requirements of the remaining 16 dependent Territories. Gabon had always been convinced that there was no single formula for ending colonial situations and that they required individualized solutions.

5. In the specific case of Western Sahara, welcome progress had been made through dialogue and negotiation and in accordance with Security Council resolutions 1754 (2007) and 1783 (2007). The Moroccan autonomy initiative, described by the Security Council as a serious and credible proposal, would give broad autonomy to Western Sahara under Moroccan sovereignty, with respect for the Kingdom's territorial integrity. It postulated a manner of exercising self-determination within the State itself, which was not only bold but above all realistic. Gabon, together with many other countries, supported that initiative because it took into account the interests of both parties and could lead to a permanent settlement. The direct negotiations held under the auspices of the Secretary-General had to be given a new impetus, since the dispute risked destabilizing the entire region and giving rise to criminal activities. The Committee should continue to promote progress towards a political solution that would be mutually acceptable to all the parties to the dispute, which should themselves seek rapprochement for the sake of the peace and development of the entire Maghreb.

6. **Mr. Tiendrébogo** (Burkina Faso) said that with cooperation between the people of the 16 remaining

Non-Self Governing Territories and their occupying or administering Powers, it ought to be possible for them to advance towards self-determination. In the meantime, the United Nations and the international community must continue to support the Territories' social and economic development, especially in view of the current economic crisis and the susceptibility of most of them to climatic threats.

7. It was gratifying that, despite the difficulties, the momentum of the direct negotiations on the question of Western Sahara had been maintained and the parties remained committed to exploring ways of reaching a just and mutually acceptable political solution for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. His delegation commended the efforts made by the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy and the invaluable work of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). His Government believed that the Moroccan initiative regarding negotiated autonomy for the Saharan region was an appropriate path towards settlement of the dispute. It was essential for the parties, with regional and international support, to begin negotiating substantive issues and to make the compromises needed to overcome their differences.

8. **Mr. Hermida Castillo** (Nicaragua) said that the administering Powers must cooperate fully with the Special Committee if the dependent Territories were to be spared further decades of colonial oppression and pillaging. Each year petitioners from the Territories provided valuable information about the difficult conditions under which the inhabitants lived, which included human rights violations, the exploitation of natural resources, environmental destruction and disdain for life and liberty. The presence of foreign military installations or bases in any Territory was a serious obstacle to decolonization, and aggravated the contamination of the environment. Only once colonialism was eliminated would the peoples of the Territories fully enjoy their inalienable rights and participate in democracy, which could not exist under conditions of colonial domination. In the coming decade, all dependent peoples must be emancipated once and for all. In the process, the colonial Powers must be guided by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

9. His Government shared the concerns over the political crisis in the Turks and Caicos Islands, where the colonial Power had unilaterally suspended the

powers of the elected authorities, and supported the call for the immediate restoration of the constitutional Government.

10. The colonial status of Puerto Rico was a matter of great concern to the Latin American and Caribbean region and had been unambiguously denounced by Nicaragua's President. The last seven resolutions adopted by the Special Committee on Puerto Rico had called for the colonial Power to allow the people of Puerto Rico to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence. The colonial Power must agree to work constructively to resolve the status of Puerto Rico so that it would not continue to be the sole exception to decolonization in Latin America and the Caribbean.

11. Nicaragua also stood in solidarity with the national liberation struggle of the Saharawi people. The two parties involved, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic, must continue their negotiations without preconditions and in good faith, so that the referendum of self-determination in Western Sahara — which included the option of independence for the Territory — could at last be held.

12. With regard to the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands, it should be recognized that Argentina stood ready to resume negotiations on the sovereignty dispute between that country and the United Kingdom. Nicaragua unconditionally supported the legitimate sovereignty of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands and urged the United Kingdom to comply with the relevant United Nations resolutions in order to achieve a speedy, just and lasting settlement.

13. **Mr. Loayza Barea** (Bolivia) said that transparent political will was essential if the goals of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism were to be achieved. The focus must now be on dialogue in order to address unresolved situations in such a way as to respect the identity and specificities of the Territories concerned. The administering Powers must commit themselves more fully to that dialogue in order to avoid neocolonialist tendencies. The situation in the Turks and Caicos Islands was in clear contradiction of the decolonization process. The Special Committee must carefully analyse the current realities, paying attention to mechanisms that reproduced aspects of colonization and tended

towards greater homogenization, the antithesis of decolonization.

14. The decolonization process must extend to not just the legal sphere, but also the economic, social and cultural spheres. In that regard, the provision of financial resources was essential to ensuring that the United Nations could continue its work in the economic and social spheres.

15. His Government reiterated its support for Argentine rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, and stressed the need for all such disputes to be resolved on the basis of constructive dialogue and mutual trust. It fully supported the right of the Puerto Rican people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and independence, in accordance with the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and international law. Direct dialogue could create a climate of constructive understanding between the parties involved in the question of Western Sahara, and must therefore be supported in the interests of finding a solution that would respect the sovereign right of the Saharawi people to decide on their own future, thereby helping to ensure the stability and peace of the surrounding area.

16. **Mr. Tessema** (Ethiopia) said that his delegation strongly believed that, in order to accelerate the process of eradicating colonialism, the support and cooperation of the administering Powers, legitimate representatives of Non-Self-Governing Territories and Member States were vital. Regrettably, in a flagrant violation of the right to self-determination enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and elsewhere, some administering Powers were still unwilling to cooperate with the Special Committee. It was absolutely critical to set action-oriented objectives and to explore a different approach to the immediate and full implementation of the Declaration on decolonization.

17. The work carried out in the Territories by the international community, particularly the United Nations funds and programmes, as well as the specialized agencies, needed to be enhanced in order to improve the inhabitants' socio-economic conditions. Similarly, the oversight function of the Special Committee, often performed against a backdrop of fierce resistance from the administering Powers, needed to be bolstered in order to keep pace with

changing world circumstances. The action-oriented recommendations contained in the Special Committee's report should be given the utmost consideration in addressing the environmental, socio-economic and other development problems of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The principle of self-determination, including independence, should remain the only acceptable political solution for all the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

18. **Ms. Booto** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) commended Morocco's initiative regarding negotiated autonomy for the Saharan region, which should make it possible to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. The Security Council had a central role to play in the matter; the General Assembly should adopt a consensus resolution expressing support for Security Council resolutions 1754 (2007), 1783 (2007), 1813 (2008) and 1871 (2009) and seeking to protect the ongoing negotiations between the parties from any outside interference. His Government commended the efforts made by the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to find a lasting solution and called on all the States of the region to show a commitment to dialogue and the political will to promote a solution acceptable to all.

19. **Mr. Idd** (United Republic of Tanzania), referring to the question of Western Sahara, welcomed the informal preparatory meetings between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO and the willingness of both parties to move to a fifth round of negotiations. He recalled that, at its recent special session, the African Union had called for the intensification of efforts towards holding a referendum to enable the people of the Western Sahara to decide on the future status of their Territory, in line with the principle of self-determination. The right to self-determination was the governing principle of the decolonization process, encompassing respect for human rights and for the territorial integrity of the country concerned. His Government commended the Secretary-General for the efforts made by his Personal Envoy and in the context of the Maghreb process and called on all States, especially those in the Maghreb region and the Mediterranean basin, to deepen their support for the initiatives of the Secretary-General. It also called upon the Security Council to use its authority to advance the process and break the stalemate in the conflict.

20. The draft resolution on the question of Western Sahara was a necessary means of encouraging and advancing negotiations by the parties in good faith and without preconditions during the fifth round. The reference to humanitarian dimensions as a confidence-building measure should lead the relevant bodies, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, to address comprehensively all such issues which had arisen during the conflict.

21. *Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) resumed the Chair.*

22. **Mr. Costa** (Mozambique) emphasized the need to complete the decolonization processes all over the world. The question of Western Sahara had remained unresolved for many years, and deserved special attention from the General Assembly. His Government hoped for an end to the repeated delays in implementing the Security Council resolutions calling for a referendum in Western Sahara, and urged all parties to renew their commitment to reach a political solution that would enable the people of the Territory to enjoy their right to self-determination. It was encouraged by the recent resumption of the dialogue between Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO, which was a significant step towards the achievement of an acceptable and durable political solution to the question of self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. His Government supported the relevant resolutions of the Security Council, and especially resolution 1871 (2009), as key instruments in the pursuit of negotiations.

23. **Mr. Puri** (India), recalling his country's own independence in 1947 as one of the most important milestones in the history of decolonization, said that it was a sad reflection that the United Nations still had to concern itself with the issue of colonialism, a product and concept of an exploitative past. Colonialism ran counter to the principles of sovereign equality on which the United Nations and other modern multilateral systems were based and contravened the fundamental tenets of democracy, freedom, human dignity and human rights.

24. He recalled that General Assembly resolution 1541 (XV) defined full self-government as one of three possible options: independence, free association with an independent State, or integration into an independent State. The goal of self-determination should be approached with a combination of urgency and special attention to the needs of the people of the

Territories themselves. Many of the Territories had already made considerable progress towards self-government. The issue was to find the appropriate format and timing for the completion of decolonization in each case. The role of the Special Committee was as crucial as it was delicate: it must ascertain the political aspirations of the people in each of the Territories and take into account their stages of development so as to ensure that they were able to acquire for themselves the political and socio-economic institutions and structures of their choice. The administering Powers had a special responsibility in that regard. The Special Committee must engage them in a constructive and meaningful discussion because cooperation, not confrontation, was the key to the Organization's work. Fortunately, that spirit had imbued the ongoing dialogue with the administering Powers.

25. Dissemination of information to the people in the Territories was crucial since, on occasion, the local population might be unaware of the legitimate political options that were available. For real constitutional and political advancement to occur, the people must have sustained access to unbiased information. Visits by United Nations missions to Non-Self-Governing Territories and the conduct of regional seminars were important tools for bridging the information deficit in the decolonization process. The administering Powers should facilitate the visiting missions for they were a source of first-hand information on conditions in the Territories and on the wishes of the people concerning their future status and were useful in planning further action.

26. India, as a founding Member of the United Nations and of the Special Committee and as an original sponsor of the Declaration on decolonization, had been in the vanguard of the struggle against decolonization. It reaffirmed its commitment to the noble ideals set out in the Declaration.

27. **Mr. Vunibobo** (Fiji) said that the Committee's work, like that of the Special Committee, had become even more pressing as it addressed the remaining 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories. There was a measured optimism as the Committee moved closer to the achievement of decolonization, but also a sense of the ever-increasing challenges. Colonial attitudes and agendas persisted, and new political, financial and other difficulties faced a Non-Self-Governing Territory as it tried to build a viable system of governance on its own. Fiji itself had embraced its independence with

great enthusiasm 40 years earlier, but its path to a better life for all its people had not been smooth or easy.

28. While there could never be certainty about the ideal time for the leap into self-governance or independence, it was absolutely crucial that such a decision take into full account the sustainability of a self-governing entity or government and the people's long-term welfare. The administering Powers had a crucial role to play in the preparations by the Non-Self-Governing Territories for the point at which such a decision could be made; the close and even-handed support of the Committee was also essential throughout that process. The interests of the people of the Territories must always be paramount. Decolonization in general, but especially in the Malvinas Islands, Western Sahara and certain Caribbean Territories, was impeded by a lack of cooperation among stakeholders: the Committee must find alternative ways of resolving the difficulties.

29. Even though decolonization had been appropriately pursued by the United Nations as a political process, a viable political entity could not exist in a vacuum. Deeper attention had to be paid to economic and social considerations in order to ensure a peaceful and permanent political status in the Territories. In the Pacific region, the administering Powers had invested significant effort in establishing and improving social and economic conditions in Guam, New Caledonia and Tokelau; his Government urged them to continue to deepen their support. It called on the Committee to support New Caledonia's offer to host the annual regional seminar and suggested that further consideration be given, in consultation with the administering Power, to sending a visiting mission to New Caledonia. In the light of the representations made by the petitioners from Guam regarding the express wishes of the Chamorro people for self-determination, his delegation wondered whether the Committee could find an alternative way of analysing more closely the information provided by the petitioners. His Government reiterated its call to the administering Power to renew its commitment to the decolonization process.

30. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan) said that Pakistan hoped that the Committee would focus on the implementation of the United Nations resolutions and decisions concerning the unfinished decolonization agenda, for the progress had not matched the goals, owing to a lack

of political will on the part of the administering Powers. The case of Tokelau, however, had set a benchmark for all others to emulate. The administering Powers must create the conditions favourable to self-determination; the United Nations had the twofold responsibility of providing assistance to the Territories through the appropriate specialized agencies and international institutions and keeping the people of the Territories cognizant of the options available to them.

31. Decolonization and the right to self-determination could not be limited to Non-Self-Governing Territories alone. Their application was universal, and their denial bred discontent and ignited conflicts. In South Asia, the inalienable right to self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir was recognized by a number of Security Council resolutions. Pakistan was committed to finding a peaceful resolution of the dispute that was acceptable to all sides, India, Pakistan and, above all, the Kashmiri people. A resolution of that dispute was imperative for durable peace, stability and progress in South Asia.

32. In the Middle East, the continued denial of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination was the underlying cause of conflict and the chief impediment to a comprehensive peace. Pakistan continued to support the just struggle of the Palestinian people for peace and freedom. Similarly, a just and mutually acceptable settlement of the Western Sahara issue could bring peace to that region and better opportunities to millions of its inhabitants. It was to be hoped that the relevant parties would achieve peace through ongoing negotiations in a spirit of accommodation and goodwill.

33. **Ms. Viotti** (Brazil) observed that since the proclamation of the first International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, only Timor-Leste had been decolonized, and prospects were still dim for the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. One way to revitalize the decolonization agenda would be to take more of a case-by-case approach in both the Special Committee and the Fourth Committee, focusing on the specificities of each Territory, including differences in their colonial relationships and in their ethnic, social and economic structures. The case of the Malvinas Islands for example, had long been recognized by the United Nations as a special and particular colonial situation involving a sovereignty dispute. Brazil reiterated its support for the legitimate rights of Argentina, and encouraged it and the United Kingdom

to resume bilateral negotiations in order to find a peaceful, just and lasting solution to that protracted controversy.

34. In most Territories, the way to decolonization was the exercise of the right to self-determination. While several territorial constitutions were being modernized to increase participation by the local population, full exercise of the right to self-determination remained to be achieved.

35. Many small island Territories had been particularly affected by natural disasters, climate change, and the economic and financial crisis. In that regard, Brazil commended the recent emergency response and humanitarian activities of the administering Power of American Samoa. Such problems would only worsen and could threaten the very existence of small islands. All administering Powers and the United Nations should take into account the special needs of small island Territories.

36. Brazil welcomed the informal talks held in August 2009 by the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy in preparation for a fifth round of negotiations on Western Sahara, and hoped that they would lead to more substantive talks between the parties and a mutually acceptable political solution.

37. **Ms. Graham** (New Zealand), welcoming draft resolution V on the question of Tokelau, said that it was relevant to New Zealand both as the administering Power and also as a country strongly committed to the principle of self-determination. It had been two years since the people of Tokelau had voted in a United Nations-supervised self-determination referendum where, for a second time, Tokelau's electorate had not reached the threshold they themselves had set for a change of status from that of Territory to one of self-government in free association with New Zealand. Tokelau and New Zealand had then decided to focus primarily on further improving essential services on the atolls, rather than moving in the medium term to a further act of self-determination. At a time when global challenges put extra pressure on small and vulnerable communities like Tokelau, the focus on core needs of the population seemed particularly appropriate. Tokelau's needs were met primarily by New Zealand but assistance was also provided by the international community and members of the United Nations system, particularly the United Nations Development

Programme working through its regional office in Samoa, and the World Health Organization.

38. The right to self-determination, though fundamental, was not sufficient on its own. The peoples who exercised it must also have the opportunities to develop fully; that was New Zealand's commitment to the people of Tokelau. It welcomed the ongoing interest of the Special Committee in the Territory and would continue to report to it on developments there.

39. **Mr. Ramafole** (Lesotho) observed that it would be difficult for an average person in Lesotho, a former colony, to understand why it was that there were nations still under colonial rule even in the twenty-first century. It was only when people had the right to determine their own destiny that there would be fewer conflicts and more economic development. Each nation was unique and the cultural identity of the peoples of the world must be preserved against potential destruction by colonization. His delegation encouraged all parties still engaged in the decolonization process to continue with all diplomatic efforts to bring a speedy end to colonialism.

40. Western Sahara's continued colonization was a cause of concern; Africa would not be free until the Saharawi people attained their freedom. Lesotho welcomed the preparations by the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for the next round of negotiations, in which the parties should engage with renewed zeal as equals and without preconditions. Lesotho had confidence that the Government of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO would find common ground in their search for the liberation of the people of Western Sahara.

41. **Mr. Oyarzun** (Spain) recalled that numerous resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly had recognized that the colonial situation in Gibraltar was in violation of the Charter of the United Nations since it undermined the unity and territorial integrity of Spain. The principle of self-determination could not be applied to the decolonization of Gibraltar because the current inhabitants were not a colonized people but had been used to dispossess the indigenous Spanish population. The United Nations doctrine on the decolonization of Non-Self-Governing Territories firmly established the protection of the rights of the indigenous inhabitants vis-à-vis the interests of the colonizers.

42. In the case of Gibraltar, there were two overlapping disputes: the first, on sovereignty, referred to the territory transferred by the Treaty of Utrecht that should be returned to Spain in application of the United Nations decolonization doctrine. The second dispute referred to borders, since part of the Territory had been occupied by the United Kingdom without any legal basis. Spain must fully recover jurisdiction over the isthmus, which was currently being illegally exercised by the United Kingdom.

43. Although attempts had been made to convince the Committee to artificially separate the issues of decolonization and sovereignty and consider them separately, the United Nations had consistently held that in the case of Gibraltar those disputes, which undermined the territorial integrity of Spain, were inseparable and constituted a clear violation of its decolonization doctrine. The United Nations had adopted numerous decisions and resolutions since 1964 calling for bilateral negotiations between the United Kingdom and Spain with a view to reaching a negotiated solution that took into account the interests of the inhabitants of the colony. His Government once again affirmed its readiness to resume direct talks with the United Kingdom.

44. The United Kingdom could not use the new Constitutional Decree it had granted to Gibraltar, or the vote in a referendum in which British citizens who were residents of Gibraltar had participated, to justify not complying with United Nations resolutions. Nor should it succeed in its attempts to remove Gibraltar from the list of Non-Self-Governing Territories without following the relevant procedures established by the Organization. It was unacceptable for the United Kingdom to claim that its commitment to the people of Gibraltar not to reach any agreements or understandings on the issue of sovereignty against their wishes justified not resuming the negotiations with Spain which had been suspended in 2002. It was likewise unacceptable to describe United Nations doctrine as anachronistic or to attempt to abandon the principle of territorial integrity, one of the basic principles of international law.

45. His Government would continue to work diligently within the Forum for Dialogue on Gibraltar with a view to resolving issues relating to local cooperation for the social welfare and economic development of the inhabitants of Gibraltar and the Campo de Gibraltar. At the ministerial meeting of the

Forum held in July 2009, with the participation of the Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation, a framework had been established for continued progress in six new areas of cooperation, which, along with the measures adopted in the first phase of the Forum, would improve the well-being and standard of living of the inhabitants of Gibraltar and the Campo de Gibraltar.

46. **Mr. Al Zayani** (Bahrain) said that the objectives of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had attracted particular attention from the international community, reflected as they were in such key instruments as the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, all of which together constituted effective terms of reference to which the Millennium Declaration had added momentum. The fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration, to be commemorated in 2010, would provide a historic opportunity for taking stock of the progress achieved by the United Nations towards the eradication of colonialism and foreign occupation. The fact that the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was soon to end without having achieved its aim should not give rise to despair insofar as it had further stimulated systematic efforts to attain the objectives of the Declaration. Such efforts had contributed to overcoming the obstacles faced by colonial countries and peoples in breaking free of colonialism and foreign occupation in order to acquire their rightful independence and sovereignty, without which their ability to pursue social, economic and cultural cooperation was compromised. In short, it was the right and duty of all States, individually and collectively, to eliminate colonialism, apartheid and racial discrimination.

47. *Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) resumed the Chair.*

48. **Mr. Mas** (Papua New Guinea) said that although the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism was approaching, much remained to be done to promote self-determination in the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories. The Special Committee would therefore continue to have an important role to play. His delegation called on all administering Powers to enhance their cooperation with that Committee and facilitate progress towards self-determination for the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories.

49. Papua New Guinea would continue to support dialogue between the peoples of the five Non-Self-Governing Territories in the Pacific region and the administering Powers concerned. His Government commended the administering Power, the United States of America, for the emergency relief and support it had provided following the recent earthquake and tsunami in American Samoa and encouraged it, at an appropriate time, to address the concerns of the people of American Samoa regarding the status of that Territory. Along with other Pacific countries, Papua New Guinea was helping the rebuilding efforts. His Government acknowledged the appeals made by the Chamorro people of Guam and supported dialogue between the people of Guam, the administering Power and the Special Committee with a view to settling the future status of the Territory.

50. He welcomed the participation in the work of the Committee of a delegation from New Caledonia headed by the President of New Caledonia that was representative of all political factions, a sign of increasing cooperation in that Territory. He also commended the representatives from the Front de libération nationale kanak socialiste (FLNKS) for their participation in the Committee's work. His Government was encouraged by the efforts of the administering Power to work with the territorial Government and the Special Committee with a view to advancing progress in the process of self-determination, supported the offer by New Caledonia to host the Special Committee's next regional seminar in 2010 and suggested that a United Nations visiting mission be undertaken at the same time as the seminar.

51. Tokelau continued to be a model for the process of self-determination. His Government understood the decision of the General Fono to defer any future act of self-determination following the two failed referendums in February 2006 and October 2007 and was encouraged by the continuing efforts of New Zealand and Tokelau to strengthen essential services and infrastructure on Tokelau, ensure ongoing development and work towards the achievement of self-determination.

52. **Mr. Hosseini** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that decolonization must remain a top priority on the international agenda; the United Nations should consolidate its efforts to advance the decolonization process and Member States should support the effective implementation of the Plan of Action for the

Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Since decolonization was a political process, in the absence of political will, especially on the part of the administering Power, it was doomed to failure. All parties must fulfil their obligations and speed up the decolonization process in the remaining 16 Territories. The Special Committee should adopt a more effective method of work and improve its interaction and cooperation with the administering Powers. He called on delegations to cooperate in strengthening the role of the General Assembly and the Special Committee in the decolonization process.

53. He stressed the importance of full involvement of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the decolonization process. The administering Powers must support their full and effective participation and the United Nations should facilitate their participation in relevant United Nations meetings and put in place a more effective mechanism for receiving and considering communications from individuals and groups from the Territories concerned.

54. The administering Powers must clearly define their decolonization policies and programmes in the Non-Self-Governing Territories and regularly inform the United Nations, in particular the Special Committee, about their efforts to increase political awareness and enable self-government in the Territories and to improve living standards. Window-dressing policies and the promotion of a colonial mentality aimed at preserving colonial rule should have no place in their respective agendas. He underscored the administering Powers' responsibility for the economic, social and educational development of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories because only people who had attained a certain level of political and legal maturity and awareness of their rights and were free from any kind of colonial mindset or mentality could freely decide on their future.

55. **Mr. Ekua Avomo** (Equatorial Guinea) expressed support for the considerable efforts made by the United Nations in recent years to promote a peaceful, negotiated and lasting solution of the question of Western Sahara which would contribute to peace, stability and reconciliation in the Maghreb region. The international community should continue to support the current negotiation process. In that context he expressed support for the proposal by the Kingdom of Morocco to grant wide-ranging autonomy to Western Sahara, which in his delegation's view satisfied the

criterion of self-determination set out in the Charter of the United Nations and constituted a realistic compromise that could serve as the basis for a negotiated solution to the dispute. His Government reiterated its support for the territorial integrity of Morocco.

56. **Mr. Maboundou** (Congo) reaffirmed his country's support for the decolonization process, in line with General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). The Special Committee, with the participation of the administering Powers and representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, played a key role in the process and in monitoring the situation in those Territories. Greater cooperation and interaction between the Special Committee and the administering Powers were essential to the task of decolonization.

57. He welcomed the progress achieved on the question of Tokelau and commended the cooperation between New Zealand and the territorial administration of Tokelau at all stages of the negotiations, including the referendums held in October 2006 and November 2007. Concerning the question of Western Sahara, his delegation reiterated its support for Security Council resolutions 1754 (2007), 1783 (2007) and 1813 (2008) and for all the initiatives of the Secretary-General and urged the parties to demonstrate political will and work towards a more intensive phase in the negotiations on the substantive issues in order to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution.

58. His delegation supported the work of the United Nations Information Centres and the Department of Public Information in promoting the objectives of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. It also welcomed the close cooperation between the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Public Information in disseminating information about the decolonization mandate of the United Nations to the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

59. **Mr. Zinsou** (Benin) expressed support for the efforts of the Secretary-General to promote dialogue among the parties on the question of Western Sahara with a view to guaranteeing the population of Western Sahara their right to self-determination in accordance with their freely expressed wishes. He welcomed the proposal from Morocco to give autonomous status to Western Sahara, and its endorsement by the General Assembly and the Security Council, and commended

the preparations for the fifth round of negotiations. All the parties — Morocco, Algeria and the Frente POLISARIO — must transcend their differences with a view to putting an end to the suffering of the people of Western Sahara, which could only be exacerbated if the parties were unable to prevent continued instability. The draft resolution on Western Sahara must establish the framework for renewal of the Manhasset negotiations, taking into account the constructive spirit of the Dürnstein consultations. Differences concerning the text of the draft resolution must be surmounted in order to ensure it was adopted by consensus, as that would send a clear signal to the next round of negotiations.

60. **Mr. Kapambwe** (Zambia) said that his delegation strongly supported the call by the African Union in August 2009 for the holding of a referendum to enable the people of Western Sahara to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. The international community had repeatedly called for the holding of such a referendum but no referendum had ever been held. The credibility of the United Nations rested on its ability to implement its decisions. Its failure to act decisively in cases such as Western Sahara was a major disappointment not only to the people of that region but also to all peoples throughout the world who were still struggling for their inalienable right to self-determination. The people of Western Sahara could not be expected to exercise restraint indefinitely. The United Nations must act to ensure that the parties respected the agreements they had freely negotiated and signed and that its own resolutions were implemented. It must act to put an end to the human rights abuses said to be occurring in Western Sahara, beginning by sending an international investigation mission to the areas controlled by both sides.

61. His Government enjoyed good relations with both Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO and supported the ongoing negotiations. It called on the parties to recognize that sovereignty resided in peoples, not Governments. It was therefore essential to allow the people to express themselves and exercise their sovereign right to self-determination. Only a solution based on a referendum with a full set of options, including independence, could constitute the true exercise by the people of Western Sahara of their sovereign right to self-determination.

62. **Mr. Ousseini** (Comoros) said that Africa continued to be the continent that suffered most from

the destabilizing effects of conflict; it needed peace, security and stability in order to confront the many challenges it was facing and combat underdevelopment. In Western Sahara and elsewhere, force of arms and intransigence must give way to negotiation, especially since the parties to the conflict were one and the same nation, sharing the same cultural and religious values.

63. His delegation believed that the Moroccan proposal of broad autonomy for Western Sahara was a wise and reasonable one for all the parties concerned and would guarantee national integrity and stability throughout the region. It supported Security Council resolutions 1871 (2009), 1754 (2007), 1783 (2007) and 1813 (2008) and welcomed the Secretary-General's commitment to successful negotiations aimed at achieving a fair and lasting political solution to the dispute. His Government called on the parties to overcome their differences and enter into a frank and sincere dialogue.

64. **Mr. Benmehidi** (Algeria) said that his delegation applauded the General Assembly's firm and rigorous attitude to decolonization and unreservedly subscribed to the exercise of the right to self-determination by the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, a principle that was enshrined in Algeria's Constitution and was a permanent feature of its foreign policy. The soundness of that position was perfectly exemplified by Timor-Leste, Namibia and Western Sahara.

65. A decade previously East Timor had been able to express its wishes through a referendum, putting an end to an anachronistic colonial situation condemned by the international community. As Timor-Leste, it had joined the community of nations and now contributed to preserving peace and stability in the region and to meeting United Nations goals. In Africa, the people of Western Sahara were still waiting for the United Nations to enable them to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in internationally guaranteed conditions of legality, freedom and integrity. In order to rescue the conflict from the impasse, a determined, proactive and visionary approach was needed.

66. From the outset of the conflict the United Nations and the African Union had constantly worked together to restore the full rights of the people of Western Sahara; they had sought to define a framework for a negotiated settlement founded on the goodwill of both

sides and sacrificing nothing of the Western Saharan people's inalienable and irreversible right to self-determination. The African Heads of States and Government, meeting recently in Tripoli, had urged the parties to the conflict and the United Nations to step up their efforts to hold a referendum to enable the people of the Territory to choose between independence and integration into the Kingdom of Morocco.

67. In the context of the United Nations, the issue of Western Sahara was clear. Security Council resolution 1754 (2007), which had been adopted by broad consensus, called upon the parties to enter into negotiations without preconditions, in order to move out of the impasse. That resolution and subsequent resolutions were delicately balanced, affording equal attention to the proposals of both parties. However, while the General Assembly and the Security Council had constantly reiterated their support for a referendum, their procrastinations had held up the continuation of direct talks for over a year. Algeria welcomed the recent talks between the Kingdom of Morocco and the Frente POLISARIO and paid tribute to the efforts made by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, whose appointment had undeniably helped restore a climate of trust. Algeria, as a neighbouring observer country, supported that process under the terms of reference established by the Secretary-General. It was fully aware of its responsibilities towards the peoples of the region and, convinced that peace in Western Sahara was in the interest of all peoples of the region, had striven to improve the political atmosphere between the two parties in order to promote a concerted implementation of the provisions of the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions. It would continue to lend its support for a consensual solution.

68. More than 18 years after the establishment of MINURSO, the Territory of Western Sahara remained closed to foreign observers and inaccessible to United Nations human rights mechanisms, an exception that the international community must remedy. The peoples of the region were linked by a common destiny; Algeria was determined to work with its neighbours to relaunch the process of Maghreb construction on solid, lasting foundations, and bring about a just and lasting settlement of the Western Saharan conflict, which would make a decisive contribution to the peace, stability and unity of the entire Maghreb region.

69. **Mr. Zoumanigui** (Guinea) said that while great progress had been made in the decolonization process, more effort was needed to give the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories the opportunity to select one of the three options set out in General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV). All actors in the decolonization process had a political and moral obligation to redouble their efforts to implement the Plan of Action of the Second Decade for the Elimination of Colonialism. His delegation welcomed the holding of the Caribbean regional seminar in Saint Kitts and Nevis in May 2009, supported the conclusions of that seminar and called on the Special Committee to intensify its cooperation with the administering Powers and representatives of the Territories with a view to promoting decolonization by developing programmes of work appropriate for each Territory. The Special Committee should also continue to organize regional seminars.

70. His Government appreciated the efforts of the Secretary-General to find a negotiated solution in Western Sahara that was acceptable to both parties and noted the willingness of the parties involved to cooperate in those efforts in order to find a prompt solution, ensure the stability, integration and development of the region and enable the Saharawi refugees to return to a normal life. It welcomed the close cooperation between the African Union observer mission and MINURSO and commended the parties' efforts to remove mines and unexploded munitions and the progress made in humanitarian demining. Bearing in mind the political will demonstrated by the parties at the recent meetings in Austria, his delegation expressed its support for the Moroccan initiative for the negotiation of a status of autonomy for Western Sahara. It called on the parties to intensify confidence-building measures, in particular through respect for ceasefire agreements and the strengthening of efforts aimed at reconciliation and the return of refugees.

71. **Mr. Loulichki** (Morocco) recalled that even before gaining its full independence, Morocco had struggled for the freedom of all peoples under colonial domination and had provided diplomatic and material support to genuine liberation movements, especially in Africa. Morocco paid particular attention to the people of Algeria, with whom it had shared the plight of colonial occupation, and supported their aspirations to liberation and independence. His delegation had also worked within the United Nations to draw up the

Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples. The Declaration had clearly established the need for respect for territorial integrity during the implementation of the principle of self-determination. Multiple colonial occupations had dismembered the Moroccan territory, but Morocco had gradually recovered its territorial integrity between 1956 and 1976.

72. In 1976, Morocco had resisted an attempt to amputate the Saharan part of its national territory and had peacefully recovered its Sahara under a negotiated agreement with Spain. During the recovery process, some of the Saharan population had been deported and confined in camps inside Algerian territory in inhumane conditions, deprived of their basic human rights. Despite Algeria's hostility and opposition to Morocco's inalienable right to territorial integrity and national unity, his Government had made every effort to settle the dispute.

73. After the United Nations had concluded that the referendum stipulated in the defunct settlement plan of 1990 was not viable, his Government had put forward an initiative in April 2007 concerning regional autonomy which provided a framework for a negotiated and lasting settlement that would respect the sovereignty and national unity of Morocco while allowing the region's population to manage their local affairs through democratically elected bodies. That initiative, which included mechanisms to guarantee respect for human rights, had been described by the Security Council as serious and credible and had created new impetus in the search for a political solution.

74. The other parties to the dispute had continued their obstructionist policies, however, invoking the issue of Morocco's respect for human rights in its southern provinces. Yet, over the preceding 10 years, Morocco had launched far-reaching reforms to ensure the protection of human rights throughout its territory, including women's rights, human development, transitional justice and the effective exercise of political, economic, social and cultural rights. Those efforts had been recognized by the international community, including the European Union and the Human Rights Council, in the context of its universal periodic review process. His Government fully implemented its international human rights obligations and had established mechanisms and a legal framework for the promotion and protection of human rights.

Human rights were safeguarded throughout the national territory without distinction from region to region.

75. The Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General had visited Morocco twice in 2009 and had witnessed his Government's desire to find a realistic and lasting solution through negotiations. His delegation had participated actively in the Dürnstein consultations, looked forward to the fifth round of discussions and hoped that the other parties would likewise adopt a constructive approach so that the dispute could be resolved and the inhabitants of the camps in Tindouf could return home, help build a modern Morocco and contribute to the prosperity of the Sahara region.

76. His Government was keen to normalize and strengthen its relations of friendship and cooperation with Algeria in the interests of the two peoples and of the Maghreb as a whole. It hoped that the Algerian Government would open the borders which it had unilaterally kept closed for 15 years, impeding communications between two neighbouring peoples and the social and economic development of the Maghreb. The time had come for all the parties to the dispute to move forward in a spirit of compromise and renewed negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations.

77. **Mr. Parham** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the representative of Spain, welcomed the continued progress of the trilateral process of dialogue between his Government and the Governments of Spain and Gibraltar. The implementation of the agreements announced by the Tripartite Forum for Dialogue on Gibraltar, held in Córdoba, Spain, in September 2006, was on track and was working well. The third ministerial meeting of the Forum, held in Gibraltar on 21 July 2009, had reviewed progress on the Córdoba agreements and recommitted the United Kingdom, Gibraltar and Spain to full implementation of those areas still outstanding. His Government welcomed the timetable for making further progress in those areas as agreed by the three parties in the communiqué of July 2009. The positive atmosphere at that meeting and the real difference the Córdoba agreements were making for people on both sides of the border underlined the value of three-way dialogue. His Government continued to enjoy very cordial relations with Spain and to work constructively on all Gibraltar-related issues. The Córdoba agreements were without prejudice to his

Government's and Spain's respective views on sovereignty, regarding which his Government noted that the United Nations did not take a view. His Government had no doubt concerning its sovereignty over Gibraltar and the territorial waters surrounding it.

78. He reaffirmed his Government's longstanding commitment to the people of Gibraltar that it would never enter into arrangements under which the people of Gibraltar would pass under the sovereignty of another State against their wishes and confirmed that his Government would not enter into a process of sovereignty negotiations with which Gibraltar was not content. While his delegation would join in the consensus resolution on Gibraltar, the reference to the Brussels Process must be seen in that context. The implications of Gibraltar's well-known position on the Brussels Process, as regarded both sovereignty and bilateralism between the United Kingdom and Spain, were clear. His Government called on the Committee to consider how its future deliberations might better take into account the modern relationship between the United Kingdom and Gibraltar, which clearly reflected the wishes of the people of Gibraltar.

79. The 2006 Gibraltar Constitution, which had entered into force on 2 January 2007, provided for a modern and mature relationship between Gibraltar and the United Kingdom. That description would not apply to any relationship based on colonialism. It was regrettable that the Special Committee's outdated approach did not so far seem to have recognized that situation and that the criteria used by the Committee in considering whether a Non-Self-Governing Territory should be de-listed failed to take it into account. His Government shared the view of the Chief Minister of Gibraltar that Gibraltar was politically mature and that the relationship between the United Kingdom and Gibraltar was non-colonial in nature.

80. As a separate Territory, recognized by the United Nations and included since 1946 in its list of Non-Self-Governing Territories, Gibraltar enjoyed the individual and collective rights accorded by the Charter of the United Nations. The new Constitution confirmed the right of self-determination of the people of Gibraltar, the realization of which must be promoted and respected in conformity with the provisions of the Charter and other applicable international treaties. Gibraltar's right of self-determination was not constrained by the Treaty of Utrecht except in so far only as that in his Government's new article X gave

Spain the right of first refusal should the United Kingdom ever renounce sovereignty.

81. While noting that Gibraltar did not share the view that that constraint existed, it was his Government's position that independence would only be an option with Spanish consent. His Government recognized that the act of deciding on their acceptance of the new Constitution in the referendum was an exercise of the right of self-determination by the people of Gibraltar in that context. The referendum, organized by the Government of Gibraltar, with the unanimous approval of the then Gibraltar Assembly, currently the Gibraltar Parliament, constituted a democratic, lawful and entirely proper act.

82. The Constitution did not in any way diminish the United Kingdom's sovereignty over Gibraltar or its full international responsibility for Gibraltar, including its external relations and defence, and as the member State responsible for Gibraltar in the European Union. That fully accorded with the freely expressed views of the people of Gibraltar. His Government did not accept that the principle of territorial integrity had ever been applicable to the decolonization of Gibraltar, nor did it accept that the existence of a sovereignty dispute implied that the people of Gibraltar did not have the right of self-determination.

83. Responding to the representatives of Bolivia, Brazil, Fiji and Nicaragua concerning the Falkland Islands, he said that his Government's position in that regard had been clearly stated by his delegation in its right of reply to the statement by the President of Argentina during the general debate of the General Assembly on 23 September 2009. He reiterated that his Government had no doubts about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands and that there could be no negotiations in that regard unless and until such time as the Falkland Islanders themselves so wished.

84. Responding to the representatives of Bolivia and Nicaragua with regard to the suspension of the territorial ministerial government of the Turks and Caicos Islands, he stressed that his Government's decision on that serious constitutional measure had not been taken lightly. The suspension would last up to two years and would allow the Governor time to restore good governance, sustainable development and sound financial management. His Government remained committed to the holding of elections by July 2011, if not sooner.

85. **Mr. Ray** (India), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the representative of Pakistan, regretted that the representative of Pakistan had seen fit to revert to the language of the past rather than focusing on the need to dismantle the infrastructure that supported terrorism and expressing resolve to take action against those who committed terrorist acts. He stressed that Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India and participated fully in the democratic process in India. Lastly, he said that bilateral disputes should not be discussed in multilateral forums.

86. **Mr. Díaz Bartolomé** (Argentina), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the representative of the United Kingdom, reaffirmed his Government's position that the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands, and South Sandwich Islands and their surrounding maritime areas were an integral part of the territory of Argentina. Since they were illegally occupied by the United Kingdom, a sovereignty dispute existed between the two countries, which had been recognized by various international organizations.

87. The illegal occupation by the United Kingdom had led the General Assembly to adopt numerous resolutions on the question of the Malvinas Islands, all of which recognized the existence of a sovereignty dispute between his Government and that of the United Kingdom over the archipelagos and called on the parties to resume negotiations in order to find as soon as possible a peaceful and lasting solution to the dispute. The Special Committee had repeatedly taken that position, most recently on 18 June 2009. The General Assembly of the Organization of American States had made a similar call in a statement adopted on 4 June 2009.

88. His Government reaffirmed its legitimate sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and their surrounding maritime areas, which were an integral part of the Argentine national territory.

89. **Mr. Sial** (Pakistan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to the representative of India, stressed that his Government condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestations; Pakistan was the lead country in the fight against terrorism. With regard to Jammu and Kashmir, he recalled that pursuant to General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV), all peoples had the right to self-determination, and subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and

exploitation constituted a denial of fundamental human rights and was contrary to the Charter of the United Nations. The denial of self-determination to and the suppression of the people of Jammu and Kashmir for 62 years were most relevant to the Organization's decolonization efforts.

90. Jammu and Kashmir were not and had never been an integral part of India. Numerous resolutions of the General Assembly and the Security Council had recognized Jammu and Kashmir as disputed territory and called for a final disposition of the State of Jammu and Kashmir to be made in accordance with the will of the people expressed through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite conducted under the auspices of the United Nations. Those resolutions had been accepted by both India and Pakistan and were binding on both countries but they remained to be implemented.

91. Although the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir was an international issue, it had been agreed that it would be addressed bilaterally through the Composite Dialogue. His Government had advanced several constructive ideas to resolve the dispute and was awaiting substantive progress towards a resolution. His delegation reserved the right to refer to that issue at the United Nations as necessary.

The meeting rose at 6.45 p.m.



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Summary record of the 7th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 12 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Al-Nasser..... (Qatar)

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* Items which the Committee has decided to consider together.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Agenda item 27: University for Peace (A/64/281; A/C.4/64/L.6)

1. **Mr. Maresca** (Rector, University for Peace), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the University for Peace (A/64/281), said that since 2001, when the Secretary-General had decided to implement a series of reforms, the University for Peace had developed into a significant international institution, expanding to include campuses and programmes around the world in order to fulfil its mandate of making its courses available to all humanity. He acknowledged regular support from Canada, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, and occasional support from Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Italy and the United States of America but expressed concern that, notwithstanding resolutions of support from the General Assembly, the University received no financial support from most of the Member States. As its enrolment continued to grow, it needed additional funding for essential infrastructure and scholarships. He invited the members of the Committee to visit the University's main campus in Costa Rica, and appealed to them to ask their Governments to support the University's mission of employing education in the service of global peace as it approached its thirtieth anniversary in 2010.

Draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.6: University for Peace

2. **Ms. Zamora** (Costa Rica), introducing draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.6, said that the University for Peace urgently needed the political and financial support of the international community to continue expanding its operations around the world in accordance with its mandate. Member States should express their support by signing the International Agreement for the Establishment of the University for Peace. She said that Greece, Madagascar, the Netherlands and Togo had become sponsors of the draft resolution. In the eighth preambular paragraph, the words "to receive" should be replaced by the words "financed with".

3. **The Chairman** said that he took it that the Committee was prepared to waive the 24-hour rule under rule 120 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and take immediate action on the revised draft resolution. The Secretariat had informed him that the draft resolution had no programme budget implications.

4. *Draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.3, as orally revised, was adopted.*

5. **Mr. Kpamatchou** (Togo), speaking in explanation of position, commended the achievements of the University for Peace, especially over the past three years. Togo had a long tradition of peace and was actively involved in peacekeeping operations in the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Darfur and Liberia. It had ratified most of the major international peace and disarmament instruments and was providing facilities for the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. Since taking over the presidency of the Togolese Republic in 2005, His Excellency Mr. Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé had pursued a policy of peace and reconciliation and had instituted a number of reforms to guarantee free elections, human rights and freedom of the press. His Government would support any resolution that sought to strengthen the capacities of the University for Peace.

6. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to take action on the draft resolutions under agenda items 35, 36, 37, 38 and 39.

Agenda item 35: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (continued)

Draft resolution I (A/64/23, chap. XII)

7. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius,

Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

France, Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

8. *Draft resolution I was adopted by 140 votes to 0, with 4 abstentions.**

9. **Mr. Quarrey** (United Kingdom) said that, as in previous years, his delegation had abstained in the vote. His Government did not take issue with the main objective of the draft resolution, which was to seek compliance with Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations, and would continue to meet its obligations fully in that regard, in respect of the United Kingdom Overseas Territories. It believed, however, that the decision as to whether a Non-Self-Governing Territory had reached a level of self-government sufficient to relieve the administering Power of the obligation to transmit information under Article 73 *e* of the Charter ultimately fell to the Government of the Territory and the administering Power concerned, and not to the General Assembly.

* The delegations of Burkina Faso, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Kuwait, Norway, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Singapore and Timor-Leste subsequently informed the Committee that they had intended to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Agenda item 36: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (*continued*)

Draft resolution II (A/64/23, chap. XII)

10. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, United States of America.

Abstaining:

France, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

11. *Draft resolution II was adopted by 146 votes to 2, with 2 abstentions.**

12. **Mr. Diaz Bartolomé** (Argentina) said that draft resolution II must be interpreted within the framework of resolution 1514 (XV) and other relevant resolutions of the General Assembly on decolonization. Accordingly, the applicability of the draft resolution to a specific Territory depended on whether the right to self-determination was relevant to that Territory. All the General Assembly resolutions on the question of the Malvinas Islands, in particular resolution 2065 (XX) and subsequent resolutions, as well as the resolutions adopted by the Special Committee, had expressly established that, owing to the existence of a sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, the way to put an end to that special and particular colonial situation was not self-determination, but a negotiated settlement of the sovereignty dispute between the only two parties: the United Kingdom and Argentina. The draft resolution was therefore in no way applicable to the question of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands. Moreover, the situation in those archipelagos and the surrounding maritime areas, which were an integral part of Argentine national territory and were being illegally occupied by the United Kingdom, was one of unilateral exploitation by the United Kingdom of the natural resources of Argentina, in open violation of specific pronouncements of the General Assembly, particularly resolution 31/49.

13. **Mr. Quarrey** (United Kingdom) said that his Government's position on the issue of sovereignty of the Falkland Islands was well-known and had been reiterated in the statement made in exercise of its right of reply to the President of the Argentine Republic during the General Assembly general debate on 23 September 2009. The United Kingdom had no doubt about its sovereignty over the Falkland Islands. There could be no negotiations on the sovereignty of the Falkland Islands unless and until such time as the islanders so wished.

* The delegations of Chile, Guinen, Pakistan and Singapore subsequently informed the Committee that they had intended to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

Agenda item 37: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (continued)

Draft resolution III (A/64/23, chap. XII)

14. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Fiji, Ghana, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Nepal, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Tonga, Tunisia, Uganda, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

Against:

None.

Abstaining:

Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Turkey,

Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

15. *Draft resolution III was adopted by 98 votes to none, with 50 abstentions.**

16. **Ms. Ljungstrum** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that while it supported the efforts of the specialized agencies to assist Non-Self-Governing Territories in educational, humanitarian and technical fields, the European Union considered that the mandates of those institutions must be scrupulously complied with. For that reason it had abstained from the vote on the draft resolution.

17. **Mr. Diaz Bartolomé** (Argentina) said that draft resolution III should be implemented in keeping with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on specific Territories.

Agenda item 38: Offers by Member States of study and training facilities for inhabitants of Non-Self-Governing Territories (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.3

18. **The Chairman** announced that Sierra Leone had become a sponsor of the draft resolution.

19. *Draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.3 was adopted.*

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Territories not covered under other agenda items) (continued)

Draft resolution IV on the question of New Caledonia (A/64/23, chap. XII)

20. *Draft resolution IV was adopted.*

Draft resolution V on the question of Tokelau (A/64/23, chap. XII)

21. *Draft resolution V was adopted.*

Draft resolution VI on the questions of American Samoa, Anguilla, Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Guam, Montserrat, Pitcairn, Saint Helena, the Turks and Caicos Islands and the United States Virgin Islands (A/64/23, chap. XII)

22. **The Chairman** drew the attention of the Committee to corrections to the draft resolution contained in A/64/23/Corr.2.

23. *Draft resolution VI was adopted.*

24. **Mr. Quarrey** (United Kingdom), speaking in explanation of position, said that his delegation had joined the consensus on draft resolution VI, reflecting his Government's full support for the right to self-determination. His Government regretted, however, that the Special Committee was continuing with its outdated approach and, in particular, its failure to take full account of the way in which the relationship between the United Kingdom and its overseas Territories had been modernized in a manner acceptable to both parties. His Government therefore considered some of the language in the draft resolution to be unacceptable as it did not fully reflect that modern relationship. His Government did not accept the assertion that self-determination did not apply where there was a sovereignty dispute.

25. **Mr. Diaz Bartolomé** (Argentina) said that his Government fully supported the right of self-determination of the peoples under colonial domination and foreign occupation in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 2625 (XXV), and, in that context, expressed support for the right of self-determination of the peoples of the Territories to which draft resolution VI referred. At the same time, it wished to reiterate the position it had conveyed to the Secretary-General in its letter dated 10 June 2009 (A/64/90) regarding the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of decolonization resolutions adopted since the declaration of the First and Second International Decades for the Eradication of Colonialism (A/64/70), which was that it deemed the inclusion of any information pertaining to the question of the Malvinas Islands in that report to be incompatible with the object and purpose of that report, which was to report on the implementation of the decolonization resolutions with respect to the

* The delegations of Chile, Guinea and Pakistan subsequently informed the Committee that they had intended to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

11 Territories covered by draft resolution VI. The question of the Malvinas Islands was subject to separate treatment in specific resolutions that gave due consideration to its special and particular features deriving from the existence of a sovereignty dispute between Argentina and the United Kingdom, as recognized by all United Nations resolutions on the question. Information pertaining to the question of the Malvinas Islands should be included in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the overall implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, not in a report which was a corollary to a resolution such as the one at hand, which did not deal with the question of the Malvinas islands.

Draft resolution VII on the Dissemination of information on decolonization (A/64/23, chap. XII)

26. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi

Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining:

France.

27. *Draft resolution VII was adopted by 150 votes to 3, with 1 abstention.*

28. **Mr. Quarrey** (United Kingdom) said that his delegation had voted against the draft resolution because it remained of the view that the obligation imposed on the United Nations Secretariat to publicize information on decolonization issues constituted an unwarranted drain on the Organization's scarce resources.

29. **Mr. Díaz Bartolomé** (Argentina) said that his Government supported the right of self-determination of the peoples who were still under colonial domination and foreign occupation, in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 1514 (XV) and 2625 (XXV). He stressed, however, that draft resolution VII must be interpreted and implemented in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly and the Special Committee on Decolonization, in particular General Assembly resolution 2065 (XX), all of which recognized the existence of a sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas between Argentina and the United Kingdom as its sole parties and established that the way to settle it was through the resumption of bilateral negotiations in order to achieve as soon as possible a just, peaceful and definitive solution to the dispute, taking into account the interests of the inhabitants of the islands.

Draft resolution VIII on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (A/64/23, chap. XII)

30. *A recorded vote was taken.*

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Cameroon, Canada, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Fiji, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Marshall Islands, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Timor-Leste, Togo, Tonga, Tunisia, Turkey, Tuvalu, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe.

Against:

Israel, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America.

Abstaining:

Belgium, France.

31. *Draft resolution VIII was adopted by 152 votes to 3, with 2 abstentions.*

32. **Mr. Diaz Bartolomé** (Argentina), referring to paragraph 7 of draft resolution VIII, recalled that, visiting missions could take place only in cases of Territories to which self-determination applied, where no dispute over sovereignty existed. That provision was fully in line with General Assembly resolution 850 (IX), which also established the requirement that any visiting mission must be approved by the General Assembly.

33. **Mr. Quarrey** (United Kingdom) said that, despite the fact that it had voted against the draft resolution, the United Kingdom remained committed to modernizing its relationship with its Overseas Territories, while fully taking into account the views of the peoples of those Territories.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.



General Assembly

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Summary record of the 8th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 13 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)
later: Mr. Valladares (Vice-Chairperson) (Honduras)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 34: Questions relating to information
(A/64/21 and A/64/262)

1. **Ms. Chambers** (Jamaica), speaking in her capacity as Rapporteur of the Committee on Information, introduced the report of that Committee (A/64/21), which provided information on the Committee's activities and recommendations in the form of a draft resolution.

2. During the general debate at the 2009 session, members had emphasized the central role of the United Nations in global affairs and of the Department of Public Information as its public voice. Several speakers had also emphasized the vital role of the Committee on Information and called for its continued cooperation with the Department of Public Information. Emphasizing the importance of achieving parity among the official languages, speakers had urged the Department to work to close the gap between the number of web pages offered in English and those in the other languages. Several speakers had said that all possible measures should be taken to strengthen the network of United Nations information centres. Traditional means of communication continued to be important in effectively promoting the message of the Organization, so several speakers had urged the Department to continue to strengthen its relationships with radio stations in Member States. A number of speakers had also asked the Department to play a stronger role in promoting intercultural and interreligious dialogue.

3. The Committee on Information had adopted a draft resolution on questions relating to information, and a draft decision agreeing to appoint Sierra Leone as a member, bringing the total membership to 113. An agreement had been reached between the Group of 77 and China and the European Union, along with other members, to form a task force to streamline the resolution and produce a revised text at least two weeks before the opening of the thirty-second session of the Committee on Information.

The meeting was suspended at 10.25 a.m. and resumed at 10.40 a.m.

4. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), introducing the Report of the Secretary-General on Questions relating to Information (A/64/262), said that during the

recent general debate of the General Assembly, the Department of Public Information had organized a briefing for members of the Committee on Information and press officers from the Permanent Missions. The briefing had focused on the various high-level events being held, and had also served as an opportunity for an informal exchange between the Secretariat and Member States. At the request of Member States, the Department would continue to organize similar briefings in the future. The next such briefing would be held in early December on the subject of the changing media landscape. The decline of the print news industry in many countries, and the rise of social media, including in developing countries, had direct bearing on the work of the Department to inform and engage different audiences.

5. The Department's efforts also involved the strategic planning and coordination of communications, in partnership with United Nations bodies and external partners, as well as providing up-to-date information and news services, including by providing press credentials to an additional 1,500 journalists for the general debate, in order to ensure national and global media coverage.

6. Efforts to engage new audiences increasingly involved the use of new information and communication technologies (ICT) to complement existing capacities in television, radio and print. The Department was conscious of the need to provide accurate, timely, comprehensive and coherent information in ways that matched the expectations of the modern communications industry and the general public. However, it was equally aware of the need to ensure that information continued to reach those without easy access to new media. During the general debate, the Department of Public Information had posted speakers' statements on the General Assembly website as soon as they had been delivered, accompanied by videos, press releases and photographs. Between 22 and 24 September, the United Nations Webcast had made available some 70 hours of coverage, which had registered some 750,000 live and on-demand views from 200 countries and territories. The multilingual United Nations News Centre had also produced a record number of stories supported by related radio programming and other multimedia material.

7. In 2009, the Department had used the micro-blogging tool Twitter for the first time, "tweeting" quotes from statements live from the General Assembly

Hall, as well as links to photographs, webcasts and other materials. Another first had been the launch of the *Citizen Ambassadors to the United Nations* campaign via the United Nations YouTube video channel, encouraging world citizens, young people in particular, to engage directly with decision-makers by uploading video messages responding to the question: "if you had the opportunity to speak to world leaders, what would you say?". Videos featuring the Secretary-General, Messenger of Peace George Clooney, and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Wangari Maathai had been viewed more than 135,000 times in total. Yet another first was the projection in the General Assembly Hall of messages from around the world in response to the Secretary-General's WMD: We Must Disarm campaign. Launched 100 days before the International Day of Peace, the campaign used the Internet and popular social networking sites to call for a world free of nuclear weapons.

8. The Department's greater use of new information and communications technologies was also benefiting the Permanent Missions. The deleGATE website (www.un.int) now provided content in English and French from the Secretariat's intranet site as well as links to other information created especially for delegates, and was being accessed around 18,000 times per month on average. The Dag Hammarskjöld Library also planned to provide instant access on the website to an archive of official documentation related to each Member State's participation in the United Nations. In coordination with the Department of Management and the Office of Information and Communication Technology, the Department of Public Information was also looking into secure ways of sharing information with Member States about the status of their financial contributions.

9. As its network of broadcasting partners expanded, opinion pieces by senior United Nations officials continued to be placed in newspapers around the world with the assistance of the United Nations information centres. The Secretary-General's op-ed on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, for example, had been published in more than 55 newspapers and periodicals in 30 countries, and his piece on climate change had been published in 14 languages in more than 30 newspapers.

10. 2009 had marked the second time the Annual Conference of the Department of Public Information for Non-Governmental Organizations had been organized

away from United Nations Headquarters, providing an effective way to reach out to those who would not otherwise have been able to attend. He thanked the Government of Mexico for their partnership in organizing the 2009 conference. Partnership, both within the United Nations system and with outside partners, remained the Department's preferred method for its communications campaigns on priority areas. For example, the Department had coordinated a United Nations Communications Group Task Force on Climate Change to facilitate discussion and promote a common message, as well as producing and updating relevant websites. The United Nations had also entered into partnerships with others, including the International Advertising Association, which had recently begun its "Hopenhagen" campaign in support of a successful outcome at the Copenhagen climate change summit.

11. In a new initiative, the Department had held the first Annual Global Model United Nations Conference in Geneva in August 2009, with the participation of more than 300 students. For the first time, each delegation had been composed of students from different countries and they had been given unprecedented access to senior United Nations officials in preparation for their roles. The event had been a great success and the Department intended to continue to project annually, with support from Member States. He acknowledged the support of Switzerland in the organization of the conference; the United Nations Foundation and the United Nations Federal Credit Union had also been instrumental in facilitating the participation of students from developing countries.

12. Turning to issues raised at the session of the Committee on Information, he said that the revamped *UN Chronicle* now comprised a mixture of short pieces and in-depth articles on relevant topics. Contributions to the magazine were actively sought from all regions, with an emphasis on ensuring gender balance and providing a platform for authors from the developing world. However, budgetary limitations continued to adversely affect the ability of the United Nations information centres to provide products and services to local communities. The global economic crisis had forced some host Governments to limit or even suspend their contributions to the Centres. Increases in rent, maintenance costs and the need to address growing security requirements, coupled with decreases in voluntary contributions, had necessitated a reduction in allocations for equipment and communications

activities. Security and safety concerns in particular required additional funding and urgent support from host Governments. Support for information centres from Governments, whether in the form of rent-free premises or contributions to outreach activities, was much appreciated. Support from Member States was also crucial to the digitization and preservation of the United Nations unique photographic, audio, and video archive.

13. The Department of Public Information was fully committed to making use of available resources to enhance and diversify its range of programmes, products and services, as guided by the priorities set by Member States, via the Committee on Information in particular.

14. **The Chairperson** said that the Committee would hold an interactive dialogue on the item, and invited members to put questions to the Under-Secretary-General.

15. **Mr. Al Hadhrami** (Yemen) praised the efforts of the Department of Public Information to improve the United Nations website but noted that some of the Arabic pages contained linguistic errors and that their content was not updated regularly.

16. **Mr. Ali** (Sudan), Rapporteur, speaking in his capacity as the representative of the Sudan, thanked the Working Group of the Department of Public Information for its efforts to enhance the image of the United Nations. He also praised the Department's work during the general debate, with particular reference to its recent briefing for the Committee on Information, the publication of *United Nations in Focus* to coincide with the opening of the sixty-fourth session of the General Assembly, and to facilitating access for journalists and publishing copies of statements on the website.

17. However, there was still a need to strengthen the focus of the Department on people in the developing world, who did not have access to affordable modern technology and mass media. The Department should create initiatives to strengthen dialogue on the best ways to present the message of the United Nations in those regions. He welcomed the improvements that had been made to United Nations Television and Video (UNTV).

18. Holding conferences away from United Nations Headquarters in a variety of locations around the world was a good way of ensuring that information about the Organization's work reached the widest possible audience, and should therefore continue.

19. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information), responding to the comments from the representative of Yemen, said that the Department was already aware of the website's Arabic translation issues, and would continue to work to reduce the number of errors and update the information on the site.

20. Turning to the points raised by the representative of the Sudan, he said that the *United Nations in Focus* publication was designed to highlight important points in an easy-to-read format. The Department intended to continue publishing at least two issues per month, focusing on various events and meetings. In 2010, the Department would endeavour to organize a briefing in early September prior to the high-level events of the General Assembly session.

21. While the Department was expanding its activities into the areas of new media and social networking, he remained aware of the importance of addressing the needs of developing countries, where those tools were not always accessible or affordable. The Department intended to continue producing television and radio programmes, printed press releases and brochures which could be distributed widely. He urged delegations to find media partners in their countries that could make use of the Department's products and programmes, and noted that many of the radio programmes were already available on the website. The Department had also signed a number of memorandums of understanding with radio stations, forming the basis of more long-term collaborative relationships.

22. **Mr. Askarov** (Uzbekistan) said that the United Nations News Centre was one of the most frequently used sources of information about United Nations activities for the people of Central Asia and praised those involved in producing the Russian language version in particular. The information on the site was objective and unbiased, which was why it was trusted by many news outlets across the region. He enquired about the financial and human resources of the United Nations News Centre's language service and its prospects for the future, particularly with regard to the Russian language.

23. **Mr. Akasaka** (Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information) said that expanding the language capability of the United Nations News Centre into Russian was a challenge, owing to inadequate resources. However, the information centres,

including those in Mexico City, Cairo, and Moscow, had been able to help translate some material. He hoped that such cooperation could continue, with key United Nations messages being translated into as many languages as possible. The Department currently had 63 information centres around the world with the capacity to work in 48 languages. They had produced material in more than 140 languages and maintained websites in more than 30 languages and it was hoped that more resources would be made available in the future support of the Department's pursuit of multilingualism.

24. **The Chairperson** invited the Committee to continue with its general debate on the item.

25. **Mr. Heller** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, congratulated the Department on its promotion and achievement of better understanding of United Nations work and goals as well as its promotion of ad hoc thematic debates in the General Assembly, and called on the Organization to maintain the objectivity, impartiality, precision and coherence of its messages. He also urged the Department to continue to update its communications network in order to encourage the coherence and effectiveness of the system's protocol for coordination of and response to health emergencies in order to encourage multilateral, as opposed to unilateral, action.

26. Since the changing international situation called for innovative ways of ensuring a better flow and greater precision of information, the Group welcomed the new structure set up by the United Nations Communications Group to enhance the coordination and effectiveness of the Organization's agents in crisis situations. The Rio Group admired the spontaneity and agility of electronic communication but, while considering websites to be a useful tool, it was concerned at the digital divide between developed and developing countries. He therefore welcomed the report's emphasis on the fact that new media did not replace traditional means of communication, the main source of information in developing countries, which should continue to be used to convey the United Nations message.

27. The Group also applauded the information and promotion deployed by the Department and the United Nations information centres, and reaffirmed its full respect for freedom of speech and freedom of the press. However, the media should operate responsibly and

with full respect for relevant national laws and United Nations instruments. In that regard, the Group was concerned at the violation of radio-electronic frequencies and reiterated the need for them to be used in the public interest and in accordance with international law.

28. One of the Group's priorities was parity among the Organization's six official languages. Applauding the initiative for the *UN Chronicle* to achieve greater methodological rigour, he urged the Department to redouble its quest for options for its publications in all six official languages.

29. The Group also endorsed the Department's endeavours in support of Middle East peace through dialogue among journalists, intellectuals and civil society, as well as its efforts to increase its collaboration with NGOs. Reiterating the Group's support for the Department's work, he invited it to continue to improve its information machinery in order to bring the voice of the Organization to the world and gain the international community's better understanding of and support for its activities.

30. **Mr. Mohamad** (Sudan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Department's policies had been built on the foundations of close cooperation and partnership with the Committee on Information, which must continue as the Department played its vital role as the public voice of the United Nations.

31. The most daunting task before the Department was to reach out to the widest possible audiences because many countries, especially developing countries, lacked adequate resources and technical means to access information on the activities and achievements of the United Nations. Since comprehensive, accurate, impartial and balanced coverage of its deliberations, decisions and actions could promote better understanding and goodwill, it was critical for the Department continuously and actively to project the Organization's ideals and accomplishments, intensify outreach and transmit its message to all peoples of the world. The Group supported the promotion by the Department of the Organization's work and issues of importance to the international community, and appreciated its many new initiatives and the Special Information Programme on the Question of Palestine.

32. All possible measures should be taken to strengthen the United Nations information centres, a vital information bridge across the gap between the

developed and developing countries in terms of access to information and communication technologies. Any decision pertaining to the Centres' reorganization must be taken in close consultation with the host countries, and must take the geography, languages and technological standard of the different regions into account.

33. Given the need for the United Nations website to be available in all official languages, more resources and effort should be allocated to achieving full linguistic parity and to bridging the language disparities among the websites. He commended the Department's efforts to improve the structure of the top layers of the website, which would improve the accessibility, usability and user-friendliness of the site content. However, the Group attached great importance to the continued use of traditional media, including radio and print press, in disseminating the main messages of the United Nations, for traditional media remained the primary means of communication in developing countries. There was a need for closer cooperation between the Department and other substantive departments, in particular, the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support, and the Department should also play an active role in raising public awareness of the world financial and economic crisis and its impact on development, including the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed goals.

34. **Mr. Sinhaseni** (Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that effective information flow not only helped to garner the international community's support for the Organization's activities, but also promoted transparency and accountability within the United Nations system. The Department must continue to ensure and further enhance the accessibility, speed and quality of that information flow; it was equally important that the information should be accurate, reliable, impartial and non-politicized.

35. Noting with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General (A/64/262), ASEAN commended the Department's dissemination of information to the global audience and its sterling work in providing clear communication and accurate information during the outbreak of influenza A (H1N1), as well as the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development. The Department's provision of adequate, credible and timely information on both issues had facilitated the

establishment of a common agenda for dealing with those critical issues.

36. ASEAN welcomed the Department's new initiatives to reach out to wider audiences, especially its use of new media in order to engage with younger people, enabling them to express their views and help to address common challenges and concerns through greater participation. However, global technological development notwithstanding, many countries lacked advanced means of communication, with traditional media, such as radio and newspapers, remaining central to communications; United Nations work in those areas should be maintained, while information and publications should be disseminated in local languages as well in order to make it more accessible to all. The Department should also help developing countries to build up their communications technology in order to give all countries access to United Nations services as well as the global information pool.

37. He welcomed the Department's close cooperation with the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support in efforts to promote United Nations peacekeeping operations; similar efforts should be made to promote peacebuilding activities undertaken by the Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Fund in order to bridge the critical resource gap in post-conflict situations. The Department was also encouraged to promote a holistic approach to United Nations peacekeeping operations and garner support for sufficient and flexible funding for peacebuilding activities.

38. The ASEAN Socio-Cultural Blueprint, adopted at the 14th ASEAN Summit in Thailand, called on ASEAN Member States to lay the groundwork for free flows of information, support fellowship and exchange programmes and enhance the national media's capacity to promote regional community-building, while the 15th Summit, with its theme "Enhancing connectivity, empowering peoples", aimed to strengthen the region's communication infrastructure through education and capacity-building in order to bridge the digital divide and pave the way for regional partnership with the Department of Public Information.

39. Speaking in his national capacity, he expressed Thailand's support for the Department's work to enhance information accessibility to the general public, regardless of gender, race, nationality or physical condition and to ensure the utmost availability of

public access to information, and promotion of public awareness of the global agenda.

40. **Mr. Ericson** (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Norway and Ukraine, said that managing the flow of information was a core activity of any major organization and an increasingly important task in the current globalized media landscape. Climate change and the influenza A (H1N1) virus stood out in 2009 as topics on which the United Nations message had needed to reach a wide audience. The Department had proven its competence in both those areas, not least in the case of the H1N1 influenza virus, on which topic United Nations information had been both timely and widespread. Credit must also go to the Task Force of the United Nations Communications Group, which had helped to maintain message coherence in communications during the influenza outbreak.

41. The European Union stood by the three priorities that it had previously outlined. First, further streamlining of the resolution by the Task Force would give the Department a clearer starting point for its work and strengthen the resolution's message. Second, efforts to maximize the output of the Department's limited resources should be continued, especially with regard to creating synergies among the various United Nations information centres worldwide. In Europe, the Organization now operated on the basis of one regional focal point for public information; where appropriate, that model should be replicated in other parts of the world as a way of creating synergies and saving costs.

42. Third, the Union assigned priority to multilingualism, and it was encouraging that the Department had continued to emphasize the parity of the official languages. Well aware of resource limitations, the Union reiterated the importance of multilingualism as a tool in its client-oriented outreach approach, in which information centres played a key role. The transformation of the *UN Chronicle* into a genuinely thought-provoking *UN Affairs* journal as an authoritative voice on issues on the Organization's agenda and on its values and objectives would enable further outreach. The Union also welcomed the

revamping of the top layers of the United Nations website in all six official languages.

43. Press access was a key factor. Given the logistical challenges involved in covering ministerial week at the General Assembly, the Department should consider allowing more than one press conference to take place at the same time. He also noted that 31 journalists had already been killed in 2009 as a consequence of their profession, and that the number could reach the 2008 record of 42 by the end of the year. It was a collective duty to halt such killings and ensure that those responsible were brought to account.

44. **Mr. Al-Shafi** (Qatar), said that his delegation supported the agreement to form a task force to streamline the resolution on questions relating to information and produce a revised text at least two weeks before the opening of the thirty-second session of the Committee on Information.

45. It was important to achieve linguistic parity in the work of the Department of Public Information. While his delegation welcomed the launch of the redesigned United Nations home page, it was concerned that not enough resources had been allocated to close the ever widening gap among websites in the Organization's six official languages. Further measures were required to ensure adequate support of languages that used non-Latin scripts, such as Arabic, and improve the quality of Arabic-language websites. The use of English and French as the working languages of the United Nations system was a repudiation of the principle of multilingualism; the Secretariat should do more to achieve parity among the official languages.

46. The question of Palestine was one of the most important issues on the international agenda, and the Department should continue enhancing its special information programme on Palestine. That programme played a crucial role in raising awareness of Israel's violations of United Nations resolutions and the fundamental human rights of the Palestinian people. His delegation trusted that the Secretary-General's reports would henceforth always include a section on the Department's activities in relation to the question of Palestine. The Department should also continue its efforts to foster international dialogue among civilizations and a culture of peace.

47. His Government attached great importance to freedom of the press and the right of journalists to perform their jobs without fear of being persecuted,

harmful or killed. However, with freedom of expression came a responsibility to serve the public good and an obligation to refrain from publishing harmful speech.

48. **Mr. Al Hadhrami** (Yemen), said that his delegation attached great importance to the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine, in particular the annual International Media Seminar on Peace in the Middle East and the training programme for young Palestinian journalists.

49. With regard to the United Nations website, he noted with concern that the number of English-language pages had increased in relation to the number of pages in the other official languages.

50. He urged the Department to appoint without delay a new director for the United Nations Information Centre in Sana'a, in view of the important role that centre played in disseminating information about the Organization to the people of Yemen, which was one of the least developed countries in the Arabian Peninsula.

51. **Mr. Valladares** (Honduras), *Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.*

52. **Mr. Taleb** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation attached great importance to the development of a new worldwide information system that was equitable and reflected the principles of the United Nations and international law. In a world beset by conflicts and increasingly complex transnational challenges, the Department of Public Information played an important role in galvanizing international public opinion and spreading the Organization's message of peace. It was also instrumental in focusing attention on such issues as the global financial crisis, climate change, the influenza A (H1N1) epidemic, terrorism and natural disasters.

53. Having reviewed the Secretary-General's report (A/64/262), his delegation stressed that information centres in developing countries should be expanded in view of the role they played in capacity-building and in training journalists.

54. While welcoming the Department's efforts to improve the United Nations website, his delegation stressed that greater effort was required to achieve, without delay, parity among the official languages of the Organization. In particular, resources should be allocated for improving the Arabic pages of the website.

55. The work of the Department on the question of Palestine was particularly worthy of commendation, but he urged the Department to pay even more attention to that question in view of the continuing suffering of the Palestinian people under the yoke of Israeli occupation.

56. He further urged the Department to redouble its efforts to close the North-South digital divide and to ensure adequate funding for its programmes in that regard. It should also provide more extensive coverage of events in Africa and focus its attention on programmes and initiatives aimed at helping the African peoples achieve their aspirations.

57. **Ms. Bey Mui Leng** (Singapore) said that Internet-based media represented an evolution of the way information was disseminated to the masses. The current widespread accessibility of computers and the Internet had empowered millions through easy, rapid dissemination of information.

58. In creating new modalities and widening its reach and impact, new media had the potential to transform the way people communicated, lived and worked. However, new media was not fair media, given the persistent digital divide between those with easy access to its tools and those who could not even afford print media, let alone computers or iPhones. Clearly, much remained to be done to bridge that divide and channel the benefits of widely available information to all. Through the Department, the United Nations could spread the positive aspects of the new media, especially by paying close attention to the developing countries' specific needs.

59. Her Government had attempted to develop a government-to-people relationship via the new media with the creation of a programme, to provide new-media platforms enabling citizens to share their views on national issues and to play a more active role in policymaking. New media, albeit in its early stages, was a useful tool for enhancing citizens' sense of identity and belonging. The experiences of countries that had assimilated new media into their outreach programmes could provide useful lessons on adapting new information technologies to local conditions.

60. **Ms. Vargas Walter** (Cuba) said that in an environment in which the media were rapidly transformed and the information flow was skewed, the goal of promoting objective, balanced and impartial news to as wide an audience as possible posed myriad

challenges. The accelerated development of ICT and related technologies had not resulted in equal benefits for all. Indeed, the gap in the access to new information technologies had increased and the digital divide between North and South had widened. The decision as to what news was circulated and what suppressed was taken by those with power, by the mainstream media outlets which all too frequently lied, manipulated history and violated the freedom of expression and information. The United Nations must seek ways to change that reality and take practical measures that would afford rational use and more social appropriation of information technologies.

61. Cuba believed that the 63 United Nations information centres throughout the world, particularly in the developed countries, must continue to play a vital role in spreading balanced information, taking the needs of the target audience into account. Broadcast media, such as radio, should be promoted as a means of informing the vast illiterate population groups in the countries of the South. Cuba therefore welcomed the Department's continued improvement of its radio programmes.

62. Once again, her delegation wished to denounce the radio and television aggression that the United States Government continued to aim at her country. Those broadcasts contravened international law as well as the rules and procedures of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). Each week, United States-based stations broadcast to Cuba more than 1,908 hours of radio and television through 30 different frequencies, at an annual cost of over \$30 million of federal funds. In an escalation of that aggression, the United States Government had begun using military aircraft to beam signals into Cuba. Of the 23 stations broadcasting subversive programmes against Cuba, 18 aimed their signals directly towards the country. Three of them were the property of the United States Government while some of the stations could be linked to terrorists who lived in United States territory.

63. In condemning those acts of aggression, her delegation reiterated that the choice of the kind of information that the Cuban people wished to receive was a sovereign decision and not one for persons who, from the United States, forged their plans against the Cuban Revolution in flagrant violation of current international rules on radio spectrum regulations. Cuba had not requested those broadcasts and did not need them.

64. **Mr. Win** (Myanmar) said that the Department had a crucial role to play in apprising States of United Nations reform by providing timely, accurate, impartial, comprehensive and coherent information about the Organization and its activities. His country fully supported the Secretary-General's initiatives regarding information on the MDGs, climate change, the impact of the economic and financial crisis on development, pandemic disease, sustainable development, poverty reduction, conflict prevention, HIV/AIDS and combating terrorism. However, priority should be assigned to the comprehensive integration of all United Nations activities. The Organization's objectives could only be achieved if people were aware of vital issues, and their active participation would pave the way for the successful attainment of its goals.

65. He welcomed the Department's commitment to ensuring that people in both developed and developing countries were informed of its activities through traditional and new communication technologies alike. And yet, dissemination imbalances and distorted reporting of events persisted in the developing countries. Increased cooperation was needed to promote a new world information and communication order and to reduce the growing digital divide between developed and developing countries. The Department could also be instrumental in bridging the development gap.

66. The United Nations information centres remained central to the Department's efforts to bring the United Nations story to people around the world, and he welcomed endeavours to strengthen those centres' communications capacity at the national and regional levels in order to promote system-wide coherence in their work with the rest of the United Nations system. The expanded use of the media and new information and communication technologies could also contribute immensely to the Department's work.

67. The establishment of a two-tier governance mechanism for the United Nations website attested to the usefulness of ICT and it was to be hoped that the Internet Steering Committee would soon produce results. He was confident that the Internet strategy for the Secretariat would enable all Member States and the general public to receive accurate and balanced information.

68. **Mr. Wolfe** (Jamaica) said that the Department, through its creative use of new media, ensured that the Organization's objectives, activities and achievements

were communicated to all peoples across the globe and that it remained a relevant and respected voice on important issues on the global agenda.

69. The Department continued to perform that critical task even in the face of significant budget cuts and an ever-expanding agenda. Over the first half of 2009 alone, it had undertaken media campaigns on a wide variety of issues. He also commended the Department's youth outreach activities, through the Global Model United Nations and the Annual International Student Conference scheduled for December in New York; he looked forward to engaging with the Department on how to ensure that young people who were unable to participate in person, could benefit from those events.

70. While welcoming the availability of information through new media, he stressed once again that traditional means of communication remained the primary source of information for peoples of the developing world. The Department's positive work could play an important role in underlining, for example, the negative impact of the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, particularly on small developing countries, including those in the Caribbean. Developing countries needed the assistance and support of the Department to galvanize international support for efforts to stem that illicit trade.

71. There was currently only a single United Nations Information Centre located in Trinidad and Tobago to serve the 14 Member States in the English-speaking Caribbean as well as the territories of the Netherland Antilles. At the very least, given the region's wide geographical spread, an additional information officer should be stationed at the UNDP Office in Jamaica to service information needs of the Caribbean.

72. In collaboration with the Member States in the Caribbean Community, the African Union and other countries, Jamaica looked forward to working with the Permanent Memorial Committee and the Department for the erection of a permanent memorial in honour of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade, and to ensure that the annual commemorative activities in that regard were a fitting and solemn tribute that would enhance global awareness and ensure that such a tragedy was never forgotten and was never repeated.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.

**General Assembly**

Sixty-fourth session

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**Special Political and Decolonization Committee
(Fourth Committee)****Summary record of the 9th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday 14 October 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)
later: Mr. Petkus (Vice-Chairperson) (Lithuania)
later: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)

ContentsAgenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of
Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*continued*)Agenda item 34: Questions relating to information (*continued*)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (continued) (A/C.4/64/L.5 and L.7)

Draft decision on the question of Gibraltar
(A/C.4/64/L.5)

1. *Draft decision A/C.4/64/L.5 was adopted.*

Draft resolution on the question of Western Sahara
(A/C.4/64/L.7)

2. *Draft resolution A/C.4/64/L.7 was adopted.*

3. **Mr. Loulichki** (Morocco), speaking in explanation of position on the draft resolution just adopted, welcomed the consensus reached, for the third consecutive year, in the Fourth Committee. It was the result of fraternal and fruitful agreement between the delegations of Morocco and Algeria and it reaffirmed the international community's unanimous support for the ongoing negotiations under the auspices of the United Nations. He expressed the hope that the spirit of compromise and cooperation that had led to the consensus would spark a more active engagement of all the parties at the resumption of the Manhasset talks. Such a change of attitude was bound to have a positive impact on bilateral relations and, ultimately, to give fresh impetus to the construction of the Arab Maghreb.

4. **Mr. Lidén** (Sweden), speaking in explanation of position on behalf of the European Union; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Republic of Moldova, Norway and Ukraine, welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus and commended the parties for their efforts.

5. The European Union reaffirmed its full support for the efforts of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy to achieve a political solution that would provide for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara. It welcomed the ongoing negotiations and the commitment of the parties to dialogue. However, it remained concerned about the implications of the conflict for security and cooperation in the region.

6. It welcomed the visit of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and encouraged the parties to collaborate with him in the implementation of the UNHCR confidence-building measures programme. In that regard, it welcomed the willingness of the parties to explore the establishment of family visits by land.

7. **Ms. Pedrós-Carretero** (Spain), referring to draft resolution VI, contained in document A/64/23 (chapter XII), said that Spain had joined the consensus thereon, and supported the application of the principle of self-determination to the Territories included in the omnibus resolution.

8. At the same time, it considered that the principle of self-determination was not the only relevant principle in carrying out the decolonization of the Non-Self-Governing Territories. There were cases, including Gibraltar, on which a specific decision had just been adopted by consensus, the principle of territorial integrity should be applied in accordance with various resolutions of the General Assembly.

9. In the decolonization of that Territory, Spain was keen to resume negotiations with the United Kingdom, in accordance with the mandate of the General Assembly, to find an agreed solution that took the interests of Gibraltar into account.

Agenda item 34: Questions relating to information
(continued) (A/64/21 and A/64/262)

10. **Mr. Mori** (Japan) expressed appreciation to the Department of Public Information for its coverage of the priority issues dealt with by the United Nations such as climate change, the influenza A (H1N1) outbreak and gender equality and for the promotion of public information through the information centres around the world, including Tokyo. He also hailed the efforts to enhance the Department's effectiveness and rationalize the operations of United Nations information centres.

11. During the period covered by the report, the Secretary-General had visited Japan and had met high-level political leaders to discuss such global and regional issues as the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, United Nations reform, including Security Council reform, disarmament and nuclear proliferation and cooperation to fight piracy. He had also met representatives of the private sector, students and academia, youth, leaders of opinion, the mass media and political parties and had emphasized the important

role that Japan and the United Nations played in tackling the world's problems.

12. Japan would strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations and would continue to support the Department.

13. **Mr. Walzer** (Israel) commended the Department for its efforts to promote Holocaust remembrance around the world. Together with civil society groups that worked with renowned institutions and experts in Holocaust and genocide studies, the Department was educating future generations on the dangers of hate, bigotry and anti-Semitism. He singled out the "Unlearning Intolerance" seminar series and the "Footprints for Hope" project, created to ensure that new generations learned the lessons of the Holocaust. It was inspiring that in addition to Holocaust commemoration, initiatives were undertaken to prevent similar atrocities anywhere in the future.

14. The Department's work on Holocaust awareness demonstrated inter alia the evolving educational role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century and constituted an inspiring example of cooperation between the United Nations and Israel. The Department's work to commemorate and learn from the Holocaust should be further supported by other Member States.

15. Under a long-standing Israeli initiative to educate the public on the principles and actions of the United Nations, his delegation renewed its invitation to the Department to open an information centre in his country to foster dialogue and cooperation in the region. Israel's unique status as a multilingual and multicultural democracy and as the birthplace of the world's three great monotheistic religions offered a unique opportunity for the Department.

16. As a young State that had attracted immigrants from many nations, Israel had great experience in cutting-edge technology and was eager to share it with the wider international community and with its immediate neighbours in particular in a bid to bridge the technological and digital divide.

17. However, his delegation was disappointed at the one-sided, biased and misleading picture of the facts on the ground in the Middle East put out by the special information programme on the question of Palestine. Until a more even-handed approach was adopted,

Israeli Government officials would not participate in the seminars organized under the programme.

18. **Mr. Rodriguez** (Peru), reiterating his country's commitment to the freedom of expression and of the press, said that Peru condemned attacks on journalists in areas of conflict.

19. There was a need to focus efforts on establishing and consolidating a system of national information centres that would spread the Organization's message in a clear and coordinated manner. Since regional and national information centres were the means of keeping abreast with public opinion around the world, sufficient resources must be allocated to them to ensure they could perform efficiently and effectively. Peru supported the establishment of a strategic system to focus on information concerning global issues such as climate change, the global financial and economic crises and their impact on development, and the A (H1N1) influenza pandemic.

20. Welcoming the positive outcome of the strategic communications workshop for communications officers in Africa held in Abuja, he said that experience should be replicated in other regions, including his own, to promote coherence and efficiency and to exchange best practices and lessons learned.

21. The United Nations Information Centre in Lima had worked together with Government bodies, public and private institutions and universities to raise the public's awareness about global issues that affected the country. He commended the Department for its efforts to promote the participation of hundreds of young people from all over the world in Model United Nations conferences. Such events helped to shape the opinions of young citizens and enhance their awareness of the substantive issues addressed by the Organization.

22. He reiterated the importance of equal treatment for the official languages of the United Nations and called for News Centre articles and press releases on open meetings to be published not in the two working languages but in the six official languages.

23. **Ms. Ataeva** (Turkmenistan) said that the Department must provide timely and unbiased coverage of world events and called for more publicity for the Organization's conflict-prevention efforts, since quiet United Nations diplomacy remained largely unnoticed. She drew attention to the decision in 2007

to establish a United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia in Ashgabat. The Centre was already playing an active role in regional meetings at the highest level. Its efforts must be supported by the media.

24. She noted the productive work in Russian of the United Nations News Centre and its enormous value, especially to countries without journalists accredited to the Organization. Turkmenistan was grateful for the coverage by the Department of the General Assembly resolution, sponsored by Turkmenistan, on the reliable and stable transit of energy and its role in ensuring sustainable development and international cooperation.

25. **Ms. Millard-White** (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), commended the Department for its work and outreach to students, youth groups, non-governmental organizations and civil society on the various activities in which the Organization was engaged, including the eradication of poverty, conflict prevention, sustainable development, human rights and HIV/AIDS, as well as for calling attention to and informing about the work of the United Nations on current issues such as the global economic and financial crisis, the energy and food crisis and climate change.

26. Since most of the CARICOM members were small island developing States vulnerable to climate change, they embraced the campaign to promote the successful outcome of the United Nations Climate Change Conference to be held in Copenhagen in December 2009.

27. Although the Internet was now a primary medium of communication, it should be borne in mind that, for the vast majority of peoples in the developing world, the traditional print and electronic media, including radio, remained the primary media for the transmission and receipt of information. CARICOM supported the continued production and broadcasting of daily news bulletins and monthly programmes on the activities of the United Nations, by means of radio stations in all the islands, including the Non-Self-Governing Territories. CARICOM also welcomed direct satellite and Internet distribution to broadcasters worldwide of the Department's materials and the Information Centre in Port of Spain availed itself of such resources for its e-transmissions.

28. However, CARICOM was concerned about the extent to which information on decolonization was

disseminated to Non-Self-Governing Territories and would like appropriate measures to be taken to address the issue. The Department must report on the status of its Caribbean radio programmes and on the coverage and dissemination of television programmes on the region by United Nations Television.

29. The United Nations Information Centre for the Caribbean served 19 English- and Dutch-speaking Member States throughout the CARICOM subregion. Despite its wide geographic coverage of roughly 3 million square kilometres and a projected audience of 6.8 million people, it had only six staff members, who must be commended for spreading the United Nations story and building media partnerships.

30. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago continued to cover the rent of the Information Centre, allowing it to use its annual budget allocation from the United Nations to carry out its communications goals more effectively. In that regard, she reiterated the CARICOM call for the Department to expand its representation in the region through the assignment of national information officers to the Kingston and Bridgetown offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to serve the Northern and Eastern Caribbean. Indeed, the allocation of both staff and financial resources to information centres in developing needed to be constantly reviewed and adequate resources should be made available to the Department if it was to effectively fulfil its responsibility in all developing countries.

31. *Mr. Petkus (Lithuania), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

32. **Mr. Martono** (Indonesia) said that the Department of Public Information should use its expertise and broad coverage to help combat prejudice and divisions among nations, peoples and religions. The universal right to freedom of expression should always be protected, but it should be used responsibly to encourage peace and tolerance. The Department could play a vital role in raising the awareness of the world's mass media about the need to combat and eradicate the practice of stereotyping in the media.

33. He called on the Department to continue implementing its special information programme on the question of Palestine. The plight of the Palestinian people, under occupation and siege in violation of the norms of international law, should be publicized to raise global awareness. To that end, in June 2009,

Indonesia had hosted the United Nations Asian and Pacific Meeting on the Question of Palestine followed by the United Nations Public Forum in Support of Palestinian People.

34. As a troop-contributing country, Indonesia recognized the importance of using the media to promote peacekeeping and welcomed the growing cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Field Support and Political Affairs.

35. The efforts to disseminate information using as many channels of communication as possible, including the new social media, as well as in languages other than the six official languages of the United Nations, in order to reach the widest spectrum of audiences, was an excellent development. Nevertheless, information material on the programmes of the United Nations would be more widely disseminated and accepted if there was more local involvement and content in its production. That could be achieved by enlisting the assistance of the United Nations information centres, which played a crucial role, particularly in developing countries, in enhancing the Organization's public image so as to bolster international support.

36. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) said that his delegation wished to highlight the central role played by the network of United Nations information centres in enhancing the public image of the Organization and in disseminating its message to local populations. The information centres, which contributed significantly to information sharing among the different communities and thus permitted the local populations to learn about the Organization's ideals, should therefore be provided with sufficient resources to fulfil their mission. Accordingly, Senegal had donated the premises occupied by the United Nations information centre in Dakar.

37. Despite the difficulties it faced, the Department continued its effort to disseminate information on the work and decisions of the General Assembly and other organs of the Organization in all the official languages of the United Nations; its work in that area should be strengthened in order to promote multilingualism in all of the Organization's activities. Furthermore, the Department of Public Information had provided excellent support to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support in

developing communication strategies that would provide accurate information on new peacekeeping activities and many other priority areas of the two departments. He also welcomed the innovative dynamic partnerships that the Department had established *inter alia* with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), students, international celebrities, the private sector and universities.

38. In that regard, he hoped that the Department would conclude agreements similar to those it had concluded with Chinese, Spanish and Russian universities for provision of translations free of charge and for translations into the other official languages of the United Nations, since it should make every effort to close the growing gap between the number of web pages created in English and those added in the other languages.

39. He welcomed the Department's special information programme on the question of Palestine and urged it to continue paying special attention to developments in that regard. It should also continue to offer its cooperation and support to Palestinian civil society organizations and to mobilize the solidarity and support of the international community for the Palestinian people with a view to promoting the exercise of their inalienable right to live in a free, independent and viable State. He accordingly urged all delegations to support the recommendations and decisions relating to the Department's information programme on the question of Palestine.

40. Senegal firmly supported the conclusions contained in the report of the Committee on Information and called for the traditional consensus on the relevant draft resolution in order to provide guidance to the Department in its work. The Department should not only comply with the recommendations of the States Members contained in the report but should also take note of the concerns expressed by delegations during the Committee's deliberations. Lastly, there was an urgent need to promote increased access to information technology by the populations of the South. As part of that effort, the Department should make more broadly known the Digital Solidarity Fund, which was an essential tool for narrowing the digital divide between the North and the South.

41. *Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) resumed the Chair.*

42. **Mr. Cato** (Philippines) commended the staff of the Department for their role as the public voice of the United Nations. The Department had been successful in attracting public attention to key development issues and in raising awareness of recent events such as the global economic crisis and the influenza A (H1N1) pandemic. While he welcomed the significant strides the Department had made to meet the challenges arising from the rapidly changing media environment, by complementing its outreach efforts in print, radio and television with the use of the new electronic media, it should remember the needs of developing countries, especially those without easy access to the new technologies.

43. Although he welcomed the Department's efforts to promote dialogue among civilizations, he lamented its lack of support for interfaith dialogue and cooperation for peace. In that regard, he drew its attention to the establishment by the General Assembly of a unit within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs as a focal point in the United Nations Secretariat for inter-religious and intercultural matters.

44. In the area of peacekeeping, the Department had been instrumental in painting a positive image of the United Nations peacekeepers not only in the host countries, but also in the rest of the world. As president-elect of the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference, the Philippines hoped to work with the Department to promote greater public awareness of the issues of disarmament and non-proliferation. The Philippines had put in place its own communications strategy on those issues using local celebrities to lead its campaign; it also planned to use the new social media to generate increased public awareness of the dangers posed by weapons of mass destruction.

45. **Mr. Chabi** (Morocco) welcomed the progress achieved by the Department, especially with respect to broadening its audience and communicating the Organization's message in areas of priority concern to the international community, such as peacekeeping, climate change and sustainable development. A new information era was dawning, with new methods for gathering, processing and disseminating information. In the knowledge-based society, information had become even more valuable, if ephemeral. His delegation was encouraged that the Department had recognized the changing environment and was positioning itself as an interface between the United

Nations and the public interested in knowing about the Organization's activities.

46. In that regard, the 63 United Nations information centres played a key role in the Department's activities in the field. For example, in March 2009, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of peacekeeping, the information centre in Rabat had organized a seminar on Morocco's contributions to peacekeeping operations, and it maintained productive partnerships with several Moroccan universities on current issues, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and climate change.

47. While commending the Department's staff, his delegation wished to underscore that they must carry out their duties in accordance with the strictest ethical standards and without any bias. He commended the Department for its continuing attention to the special programme on the question of Palestine.

48. Multilingualism was vital to the work of the United Nations; nevertheless, the linguistic parity frequently demanded by the Member States was not yet a reality. His delegation hoped that the Department would redouble its efforts in that regard. The Department should play a more vigorous role in promoting dialogue among religions and civilizations.

49. Noting the efforts to establish guidelines and standardized operating procedures for communications in times of crisis, he said that the Department's special mission meant that it had to resort increasingly to new information and communications technologies. He accordingly hailed the effort to make the web page of the United Nations more user-friendly. However, it was encouraging to note that, while looking towards the future, the Department had not forgotten the past. As an African State, Morocco commended the Department for the organization of the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade.

50. **Mr. Starčević** (Serbia), recalling his 14 years of experience as a former staff member of the Department of Public Information, including nine years as Director of the United Nations information centre in Delhi, said that the report of the Secretary-General showed how much the Department had accomplished in the first half of the year to highlight burning issues, particularly through the activities of its information centres.

51. He believed deeply in the importance and value of information centres and had witnessed the greatest damage done to the Organization since its inception: the closure of most of the information centres in Europe in the name of rationalization, despite the fact that the sudden closure had created such monumental expenses and loss of United Nations property that it would have been much cheaper to have let them continue to exist. Having a United Nations information centre within a country was a sign of distinction, like having a United Nations embassy, and he would never understand how the respective host Member States had accepted their closure without a murmur.

52. Apparently the decision had been largely based on a theory that the centres were important for developing countries, but not for developed ones. In fact, they were important for both, for different reasons. They helped respond to the special needs and requirements of developing countries in the field of information and communications technology for an effective flow of information, in addition to enhancing the public image of the United Nations and disseminating its message to local populations. In developed countries, it was the latter tasks that were the most important especially since support for the United Nations occasionally waned in the developed world.

53. The doctrine of "hubs" had been offered to make the decision more palatable; all of Europe would be covered by the information centre in Brussels. However, without a continuous presence in the country there could be no efficient information work; otherwise, the needs of the entire world could be covered by the United Nations Headquarters alone.

54. However, the solution to not increasing and perhaps even reducing the costs of maintaining a network of information centres existed: system-wide coherence and pooled resources. The centres could respond to the information needs of all the United Nations agencies present in a country and they routinely did so. Hence, there was no justification for each agency to have its own information officer; instead, part of the cost of maintaining such officers should go towards the costs of maintaining an information centre.

55. Lastly, he suggested that the Committee should revive the practice of inviting directors of information centres to a meeting so that they could present their

achievements and results and answer any questions the delegations might wish to raise.

56. **Mr. Mana** (Cameroon), highlighting the central role played by the United Nations in world affairs, said that it was important for the Department of Public Information to continue to disseminate information on the issues that concerned all the countries of the world. Since the current main concerns of the international community were the global financial crisis and climate change, the Department should emphasize those issues. Indeed, developing countries continued to be affected by the recession, which was making it even more difficult for them to achieve the MDGs. Furthermore, such countries suffered more than the developed world from climate change, even though they bore less responsibility for greenhouse gas emissions. The Department should continue to provide information to the international media about the problems and expectations of those countries. Africa should benefit from sustained attention in that regard.

57. Although significant strides in information and communications technologies had brought peoples and cultures closer together, the print media and radio broadcasting were still necessary. The new technologies operated on electricity, yet Africa was affected more than other regions by the global energy crisis.

58. The Department should continue to disseminate the values of peace among and within Member States. In that regard, the role of the information centres was vital and they should be given the necessary resources to increase the effectiveness of their actions in the field. In addition, the Department should continue working towards cultural diversity and multilingualism.

59. His delegation endorsed the main recommendations of the report of the Secretary General on progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society outcomes at the regional and international levels (A/64/64-E/2009/10) in order to build a people-centred development-oriented and inclusive information society. It also welcomed efforts made by the African regional organizations with the support of the Economic Commission for Africa, which had led to the adoption by the Central African States of a regulatory framework for information and communication technologies, especially with regard to electronic crime and the protection of personal information.

60. The General Assembly's recognition of the role of information and communication technologies as a catalyst for the achievement of the MDGs and their application in the field of health care was very welcome. Furthermore, Cameroon appreciated the support provided by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to numerous distance education initiatives and looked forward to the implementation of an initiative of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) designed to strengthen the role of the new technologies in agriculture and food security.

61. **Mr. Alzaabi** (United Arab Emirates) said that recent unfavourable global challenges such as the financial, economic and food crises, and the spread of the A (H1N1) pandemic, together with other challenges arising out of climate change and its implications for world security, peace and stability made it all the more important for the United Nations system to disseminate accurate and comprehensive information on those matters, and to promote awareness of their implications among the international community.

62. His delegation believed that it was particularly important to ensure the free and balanced flow of information and to avoid using information to exert cultural or ideological pressure. He renewed his delegation's call for the development of an international code of ethics that would help to establish appropriate legal and moral standards, clarify the responsibilities of governments and mass media organizations and ensure accuracy, objectivity, transparency and credibility in the transfer and use of information, respect for religious beliefs and cultural diversity and the rejection of fanaticism and racial and ethnic discrimination in accordance with the Charter, as well as ensure the well-being, safety and freedom of movement of information workers, especially in areas of conflict and tension.

63. It was also vital to bridge the digital divide in information and communications technology between developed and developing countries. In that context the United Nations should redouble its efforts to provide support for its programmes and information centres in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, as well as providing, in cooperation with the developed countries and donors, technical assistance to the media organizations of such countries including training for information workers to enable them to keep pace with worldwide developments in their field.

64. It was also necessary to provide financial and technical resources and to ensure that they were equitably allocated to information and translation units, in particular those working in the Arabic language, to ensure the principle of equitable treatment of all the six official languages of the United Nations in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly in order to ensure the translation of all the databases on the United Nations website as well as all United Nations resolutions and documents, verbatim records and the texts of international conventions and treaties. He also called for the increased use of the Arabic language in radio and television broadcasting as well as on the websites of the specialized agencies.

65. Every effort should be made to ensure that the standard of the services provided by the Department of Public Information was maintained during the refurbishment of the Headquarters premises. Furthermore, iSeek, the Secretariat's intranet site, should be made accessible to all delegations and to the permanent missions of Member States.

66. The Department should continue its efforts to publicize all aspects of developments in Palestine, particularly the ever increasing suffering of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation, as a result of which many innocent people were killed daily and their property confiscated and destroyed in flagrant violation of the principles of international law. In that context, he called for continued support for the annual training programme for Palestinian journalists at United Nations Headquarters.

67. His Government believed that it was desirable for its citizens to keep abreast of regional and international affairs and had therefore adopted legislation protecting intellectual property and facilitating the access of its national media organizations, including those in the private sector, to the most up to date means of communication so that they could conduct their broadcasting activities more effectively in the service of society and gain better access to other civilizations and cultures while ensuring that the purity of the values, principles and traditions of the Islamic faith were preserved.

68. In line with its policy of openness to the outside world, his country had continued to adopt a series of bilateral conventions and memorandums of understanding on information and culture, including some with the United Nations, and to strengthen its

participation in regional and international information-related conferences, symposiums, exhibitions and projects so as to be involved in worldwide developments and to participate more effectively in supporting development programmes and plans in the field of information, including programmes to assist developing countries and countries that had suffered from conflict and natural disasters.

69. In conclusion, he hoped that the Committee's discussion of the item would be conducive to further international cooperation in the field of information and would open up channels of communication between peoples, contribute to transparency, fairness and impartiality and promote a culture of peace, tolerance and dialogue between civilizations for the benefit of future generations.

70. **Mr. Valero Briceño** (Venezuela) expressed appreciation for the work of the Department of Public Information, especially during the plenary debate of the Assembly each year. The United Nations strategies for the dissemination of information should take into account the needs and circumstances of all countries. His delegation believed that it was vitally important to overcome the disparities in information and communication technologies between developing and developed countries and that all countries should have equal access to the new technologies.

71. A regional television station, Telesur, had been established by his country and other South American countries to help to overcome the news gap between the North and South. It promoted a new vision that reflected the actual situation in the developing world, especially in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. It was an expression of solidarity and cooperation among countries and peoples and defended the right to sovereignty and self-determination of the people, especially the Palestinians' right to self-determination. Furthermore, Telesur represented an alternative to the vast communications monopolies that promoted the interests of the national and international elite.

72. However, Telesur faced many challenges. Its signal was restricted by the cable television companies controlled by the communications monopolies and its journalists were often attacked. Indeed, a systematic campaign was being waged against Telesur by the powerful media companies in collusion with some of the private media in his country. The Bolivarian

Republic of Venezuela attached great importance to freedom of thought and expression, which was embodied in the Constitution, but it was witnessing a new type of terrorism: media terrorism. The 2002 coup d'état against President Hugo Chavez had been promoted by the owners of the major national media.

73. The Venezuelan Parliament had enacted new telecommunications legislation, which guaranteed access to communications and information to all Venezuelans and encouraged the involvement of the society at large in the management of sources of information. The country was building up a democratic and participatory information and communications system. The new media, with a social and humanistic content, were helping to raise the awareness and the intellectual, cultural and education levels of the people.

74. **Mr. Vidal** (Uruguay) said that in 2008, Uruguay had informed the Committee about the implementation of a Government-funded countrywide innovative initiative entitled the "Ceibal Plan", the first time that the "One Laptop per Child" project of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology was being implemented. Under the plan, every pupil and every teacher in the country's public schools, from the first through sixth grades, had received a laptop computer: a total of 380,000 units. The main objective was to foster innovative use of computers within the classroom, provide technical support and teacher training, develop relevant content, form learning communities, and foster the participation of families and society at large.

75. Through the public school students, the programme sought to facilitate computerized information and networking between students and their homes, and between teachers and schools, in order to promote digital inclusion and reduce the gap with respect to other countries and among its own citizens, while facilitating better access to education and culture. The programme included children with motor, visual or intellectual disabilities, who received machines specially designed for their needs. Private schools could join the programme if they wished, acquiring the laptops at a low cost.

76. Thanks to the initiative, there was a profound change in teaching and learning that was generating equal opportunities, beginning from childhood, for access to the information and knowledge essential to achieving a more inclusive and egalitarian society. He therefore called for international cooperation to

promote access to information technologies in the less developed countries and social sectors.

77. **Mr. Kanaan** (Observer for Palestine) said that, as demonstrated by General Assembly resolution 63/28, the special information programme on the question of Palestine enjoyed considerable support and was effective in increasing the awareness of the Palestinian problem among the international community. The programme fostered a climate that was conducive to dialogue and supportive of the peace process and the ending of the Israeli occupation so as to enable the Palestinian people to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination and to establish their own independent State with Jerusalem as its capital and to find a just solution to the problem of Palestinian refugees in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

78. He expressed his gratitude to Member States for their support of the special information programme on the question of Palestine. The work of the Department in organizing annual international seminars on the question of Palestine and peace in the Middle East, the most recent of which had been held in Rio de Janeiro in July 2009, was much appreciated. He suggested that the Department should consider holding such events twice a year in future and expressed the hope that exhibitions similar to the permanent exhibition on Palestine at United Nations Headquarters would be arranged at the Offices of the Organization in Geneva and Vienna.

79. It was important to continue the Department's training programmes for Palestinian broadcasters, journalists and information specialists. Their participation in those programmes was particularly important despite the obstacles imposed by Israel as the occupying Power and the unjust blockade imposed on the territory of Palestine, particularly in the Gaza Strip. At a time when the importance of the role of information in promoting dialogue between the Palestinian and Israeli sides was under discussion, and when international efforts were being made to revive the peace process and reach a peaceful and just settlement of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, Israel was continuing its illegal and inhumane activities against the Palestinian people, including Palestinian journalists.

80. That had been particularly evident during the barbaric war launched by Israel against Palestinian

civilians in the Gaza Strip in which 1,400 Palestinians had been killed, including five journalists. Israel was continuing its repressive campaign to suppress freedom of speech and of opinion and to conceal the truth. Despite the fact that international humanitarian law afforded protection to journalists even during military operations, Israel continued to target Palestinian journalists who were working tirelessly to cover events in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, subjecting them to barbaric ill-treatment. Similar treatment was meted out to foreign journalists who had been covering developments in the Palestinian homeland in order to drive them away from the scene of events, especially in occupied East Jerusalem, so that they would be unable to report to the outside world about what was happening to the Palestinian people.

81. Israel's practices were a flagrant breach of international law and custom relating to individual and journalistic rights. He called on the international news media and on associations of journalists to publicize the inhumane and illegal Israeli occupation and to exert pressure on Israel by all available means to desist from such practices and to enable Palestinian journalists and the foreign newspaper correspondents to report on events in Palestine.

82. The report of the United Nations fact-finding mission in Gaza, known as the Goldstone report, which had concluded that Israel had committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and grave violations of human rights law and international humanitarian law, deserved to be given wide international publicity.

83. Because of the continuing Israeli occupation, the Palestinian people had been deprived of access to modern communications services and information technology and no development could take place until the ending of the Israeli occupation, including the occupation of East Jerusalem, the Syrian Golan, the Shab'a farms and other Lebanese territories that Israel continued to occupy, and the establishment of a lasting, just and comprehensive peace bringing security and stability so that all people in the region could exercise their legitimate rights, including their right to information and the means of communication, and could take their place in the world economy and have opportunities for employment so as to eradicate poverty and ensure that future generations could live in peace and prosperity.

The meeting role at 1 p.m.